

Sensational
Romance

UNSEEN FIRES

Begins
in this Number

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IN SPITE OF THE PEASANT BOY'S COSTUME AND CLOSELY CROPPED HEAD VALENTINE RECOGNISED ZITELLA.

UNSEEN FIRES.

BY EFFIE ADELAIDE ROWLANDS.

CHAPTER I.

UNDER THE GREENWOOD TREE.

THE leafy days of June had come, the most beautiful in all the year, and had come with a burst of heat and radiance which had never been exceeded, even beneath the glowing southern skies of bright Castile.

A horseman who had been riding for many hours along the unsheltered high road now

turned gratefully into the forest, which would be his destination.

The forest was dense, but in one place there was a clearly-defined path between gigantic trees, whose interlacing boughs formed a cool green canopy keenly appreciated by the traveller, whose brows throbbed fiercely from his long exposure to the scorching rays of the sun.

The solitary equestrian was an Englishman by birth; but, as his hair and colour-

ing betokened, there was a strong admixture of Spanish blood in his veins; that he was brave, nobly-born, rich, unhappy, his equipments and mien implied.

His face had no principal source of attraction, no prominent feature, for all were perfect, from the deep dark gray eyes that spoke of noble instincts and haughty pride mingled with Southern passion, to the chin, which terminated a perfect oval, and which, without being in the least indicative of weakness or effeminacy, would not have been too heavy for a woman's face.

Two lines between the jetty eyebrows and a downward curve of the finely-formed mouth betokened two salient points of Valentine Eyre's character. Firstly, that he was intensely melancholy; secondly,

SUCCESSFUL COMPETITORS IN OUR PUZZLE COMPETITION SPEAK HIGHLY OF OUR BEAUTIFUL BROOCHES AND PINS.

that a deep-rooted cynicism, whether real or acquired, was his prevailing mood.

As far as the costume of an English gentleman can indicate his position, Valentine's attire at once, faultless and negligent, betokened him a man belonging to the upper ranks of society; but it was his horse which he bestrode that gave chief evidence of his wealth.

It would not have required a judge of equine points to decide that there was the worth of hundreds of guineas in that noble steed. "Who looked as if the speed of thought were in his limbs."

But Valentine would not have parted with the Don for his weight in gold. The eccentric, unsocial Englishman had through two years made a friend and companion of this horse, which in one of his wild and daring adventures he had captured on the plains of Tartary.

They had penetrated the heart of the cool green forest, and Valentine, whose thoughts were in the past, was taking no heed of the way, when suddenly the Don paused, and while his rider felt him tremble beneath his weight, raised his noble head, neighing long and loudly, and breathing hard through velvet nostrils, pawed the ground impatiently.

"What is it?" murmured Valentine in soothing tones. "What is it, my good Don?" he repeated, patting the glossy neck of the animal, who, strange to say, seemed in no wise comforted by his master's tones.

"What does it mean?" muttered Valentine, but with no fear for his personal safety, for the pistol which he carried in his belt were fully primed and loaded; then peering through the trees he caught at some distance the glimpses of a fire and moving figures, and at once decided that he was in the neighbourhood of a gipsy encampment.

Again Valentine patted the neck of his steed, who went on a few eager paces and then stopped short again, neighing more loudly than before, and as the awakened forest echoes died away another steed responded from the distance to the Don's call.

"The horse knows that he is near one of his own kindred," said a sweet voice in a strange tongue, a mixture of Spanish and Romance, and curbing his impatient steed with a firm hand, Valentine turned his eager, wondering eyes in the direction from which the sounds had proceeded.

There, on his left, in the cool shadow of chestnut boughs, Valentine saw a vision before him whose unparalleled loveliness his heart for a moment felt faint with awe and wonder.

The form, which seemed too beautiful for mortal world, was that of a young girl who might have been any age from twelve to seventeen. There she stood like a nymph of the forest, her brown and shapely limbs contrasting well with the crimson garment which scarcely reached beyond her knee. Her small face was a perfect oval, with a complexion which represented the clear hue of the olive; there was no red, but in the full and daintily-formed lips, which, being slightly parted, revealed two tiny rows of teeth that sparkled like priceless diamonds in the sun's rays. The orbs that lay in the shadow of silken jetty fringes were black as night, but they were more than that—

"They were so soft, so beautiful and rife,
The very air seemed lighter for those eyes."

Like living amber and fine as spun silk were the tresses which waved in lavish abundance over the girl's bare shoulders and arms, until Valentine felt almost angry, because the beautiful profusion would have hidden from his sight the little brown hands

beside which even Psycho's own must have seemed coarse and unshapely.

He could think of nothing which would offer comparison to the beauty and grace of this forest child as she stood there with eyes down bent on the ground, with such an air of modesty and innocence that he even felt a pang of regret, when, for the sole pleasure of looking at him, the wood nymph flung back the amber clouds of hair which enveloped her, and lifting her eyes made above them a sort of penthouse with her hands, thus showing them perfect from the little rounded wrists to the very tips of the tapering fingers.

"We have got a horse like him," said the girl, as the Don neighed again, and won another eager response from the distant encampment. "Hermann brought him from Tartary last year."

"Who is Hermann?" asked Valentine, carelessly, while his fingers played with the Don's flowing mane, and he continued to gaze at the picture before him with a fixed, eager glance.

The girl's lip curled somewhat scornfully. "Hermann is Hermann," she replied, in listless tones; "one of our people."

"How many are your people?" asked Valentine, feeling that he must know something of those to whom this lovely child belonged.

"There are a great many," replied the girl; "and Hermann is my cousin. He is not altogether like our people," she continued, with more spirit in her tones. "They all look up to Hermann."

"Do they love him so?" asked Valentine, for the mere pleasure of hearing the girl speak.

"No; they fear him."
"And is he dear to you?" asked Valentine, curiously.

The question won a look of surprise from the dark eyes; but before the girl could answer a voice rang through the forest, a voice with a rough tone of anger in it calling "Zitella! Zitella!" and at the repeated sound of her name the gipsy started like a frightened fawn.

"I must go," she whispered, hastily. Then, with one more wistful look, she turned, and fled away through the forest with the speed of an antelope until she disappeared from view, when Valentine felt as if the sun had set, and with it the whole beauty of the scene.

"I must see her again, thought Valentine, as he continued his journey along the forest path, which was now haunted by a vision of those lovely dark eyes looking up at him through a profusion of amber tresses.

"Heavens! how exquisitely fair she is!" continued the young man. "The very air which she breathed seemed to borrow life and beauty from her presence! And 'Zitella,' what a lovely name! How wild and free, like herself; and soft as—as this forest breeze!"

Valentine paused on the name, repeating it softly once or twice, then urged his steed onwards, for there was a restless mood upon him, and he would fain have banished from his mind the memory of this lovely being, for whom he sighed to think that she was only a gipsy, ignorant, wild, unchristianised.

Then came the thought that he might be able to do something to better her condition, and so Valentine determined to see Zitella again, but by herself, if possible, for he had no desire to make acquaintance with the gipsy settlement.

Valentine rode on to the town, where he found a tolerably comfortable inn, and a very old acquaintance.

The two talked together of days in which no cloud had shadowed the horizon of Val-

entine's life. The two talked together, and in the renewal of old and happy memories, the episode of the forest was forgotten; but when the friend had taken his departure, Valentine thought once more of Zitella; and, having many idle hours on his hands, the young man thought that they could not be better employed than in the cultivation of the gipsy girl's acquaintance.

Accordingly, one morning Valentine called for his horse, and braving the unsheltered high road, traversed the two or three miles which lay between the town and the forest that had been the scene of his idyll.

That very morning Zitella had wandered far from her companions, so far that even her lithe young limbs grew weary, and at length she lay down on a bank of thick green moss by a broad rivulet, under the shade of drooping chestnut boughs in the full bloom of their beauty.

The green boughs threw down tender shadows on the lovely face, making a picture which, as he drew near, caused Valentine to hold his breath while he dismounted, and leaving the Don to follow at his pleasure, approached the slumberer with a cautious tread.

One little hand rested beneath the girl's cheek, the fingers of the other pressed the stem of a crimson flower which was springing through the moss, as if she had been about to pluck it, when, like the sleeping beauty of old, Fairy Slumber came and sealed her eyelids.

"Love, if thy kisses be so dark,
How dark those hidden eyes must be!"

Valentine was by the girl's side now, and as he gazed upon the lovely sleeping form he could scarcely refrain from bending down and pressing to his lips the tiny hand that held the stem of the flower, but as he thought about it the girl raised her eyelids slowly, and looked at him with a gaze, half wondering, half confused.

Gradually a smile of recognition dawned round the wood nymph's lips, warming Valentine's heart as the first rays of Spring sunshine warm the perished earth; but the smile now faded to something like a frown as Zitella said imperiously—

"You awoke me, I was having a happy dream!"

"Pardon me!" murmured Valentine, with a slight smile. Then, after a moment's pause, he continued, lightly, "When the prince awoke the sleeping beauty she rewarded him with everlasting happiness. You will be less merciful, but prithee, sweet maiden, if you are the queen of this forest, and mean to punish me for my crime, let me be changed into one of those chestnut trees that I may watch over your noonday slumber."

Zitella smiled, but her eyes assumed a wondering expression, and Valentine saw that though his words charmed her ear she did not understand their meaning. He must speak to her in simpler language.

But it was difficult to start a conversation with one who had spent all her life in the forest, and probably knew little of anything of civilized ways.

True, there was nature—the trees, the flowers, the stream—the lark at that moment singing high at Heaven's portal, and filling the earth and air with melody; but Valentine thought that long familiarity with these things would have dulled the girl's perception of their beauty, and it would have disappointed him cruelly to see no responsive glow of sympathy in those dark eyes when he spoke of the bird's song, or the red flowers springing through the green grass.

"What deep earnest eyes you have, child," said Valentine at length. "You look just now as if you were gazing into the

future. I should like to know what you see there for yourself."

The girl smiled dreamily, but though she lowered her gaze there was no trace of confusion on the perfect face.

"Or for me," continued Valentine, after a slight pause. "I wish, Zitella, that you would tell me my fortune."

Zitella's red lips curled scornfully. She turned away her head with a haughty gesture which astonished Valentine. An empress, he thought one moment, must look undignified and plain before this imperious child of the forest.

"I do not tell fortunes," said Zitella, after a little while. "You must go to Zara, my foster-mother, who will unravel the mystery of your future."

"I would rather hear it from you," persisted Valentine, with a smile. "I am sure you can tell me what I want to know."

"What do you want to know?" asked the girl, languidly, and still without glancing at her companion.

Valentine felt piqued at her indifference. He thought of the high-born, lovely women who had once lavished on him their tenderest smiles, for until he left it of his own accord, he had been the pet and darling of society.

It was hard to be disdained by an unsophisticated child who had never left the forest; but just then Valentine felt that Zitella's brightest smile would buy the beauty of all the world's women a hundred times over.

The gipsy girl's voice broke in on his reflections.

"You want to know," she murmured, languidly. "if you will be rich and great?"

"No, that I do not," was the energetic reply. "I am great already, as far as worldly position goes, as great as ever I wish to be, for I have no ambition, and I have more money than I can spend; but," tenderly, "there is one thing I want to know that you can best tell. Will any one ever care for me, say, for instance, such a sweet maiden as you?"

A delicate pink colour like that of a new rose stole into the girl's cheek, and by the tremulous heaving of her bosom Valentine could see that she was touched out of her contemptuous indifference to him, but still she continued to avert her eyes, gazing on the rivulet in silence, and Valentine, though he scanned the face closely, failed to read the workings of the girl's mind.

"Care and dear," she murmured at last, in musing tones, "what do these words mean? Yesterday you asked me if Hermann was dear to me."

"Poor child!" said Valentine, pityingly. "There must be little tenderness in your life if the meaning of such words are unknown to you!" Then, after a pause, he added, quickly, "Do you know nothing of love?"

Zitella looked up at her questioner with wide open and half eager eyes.

"Love?" she repeated, dwelling on the word as if it pleased her. "No. What is it? Will you teach me?"

Valentine's face flushed and paled with keen and swift-changing emotion. The girl's innocent question first filled him with delight, then smote his heart with a guilty pang.

"Oh, not I," he exclaimed, passionately; and then, after a pause, he added impressively, "You are happy in your ignorance, Zitella. And why not, for you are only a child; and knowledge of such things will come to you all too soon."

"I am fourteen," replied the girl coldly. "Zanon, my foster-sister, is only two years older, and she is married—married to Ismael."

"Zitella, do you want to be married?" asked Valentine, in a disappointed tone.

"I want to learn things," replied the girl, disdainfully. "I know nothing."

"You are a foolish child. Knowledge will not increase your happiness."

Zitella's lip curled scornfully.

"I do not want to be happy," she said, in a calm, deliberate way. "I want—"

"To love, to be loved," put in Valentine as the girl paused, as if in need of a word to express her thought.

"I want to be great, to have power."

Zitella spoke slowly, and with intense scorn; and Valentine, listening, felt a sharp pang of disappointment that one so young and fair should be the slave of ambition.

It was a bitter disillusion, but he only said earnestly—

"If this is your desire, Zitella, then, love, be lovable; this is the secret of a woman's power."

Zitella's face grew pale, a strange, lurid light flashed up in her eyes for a moment, and made them more lovely than ever.

She leaned her cheek on her hand in a thoughtful attitude, and Valentine just caught the whispered murmur which fell from her lips in words that did not seem for her companion's ear.

"I am to be betrothed to Hermann in a few days."

"Do you love him, Zitella?" asked Valentine with a thrill of pity.

"I do not know," replied the girl, thoughtfully. "He is tall and strong, with handsome dark eyes; and he brings me presents from the towns. Then he is great, the greatest of all our people. As Hermann's wife I should have power. The others would look up to me as they look up to him."

Valentine for a moment forgot the beauty of the face and form before him in the disgust and anger caused by these words.

But these feelings did not last long. Soon pity of Zitella overcame him, and in his anxiety to save her from the fate on which she was walking blindly, he said in earnest tones—

"Child, you must not marry Hermann if you do not love him. You are so young, your heart is yet asleep; and when it wakes it will not be to the man whom you have married without love."

Zitella shrugged her shoulders, and looked very petulant as she heard these words.

"Oh! why do you dwell on that string?" she asked patiently. "Did you come to the forest to talk to me of love?" Then, before Valentine could answer, she continued wearily, "But you do not understand. You forget that I am a gipsy, and a gipsy I must marry, or not at all. And why not Hermann? He has more power than any of the others, and I like him better than any one else."

And, hearing this, Valentine could utter no further protest, nor did he desire it.

His interest in the girl was changed to contempt that almost amounted to dislike. Even her beauty failed now to move him.

He shuddered at the thought of the contrast between mind and body.

He deemed it well that Zitella's life should be spent in the forest, for here, at least, the power for which she thirsted would be limited; but, let loose about the world, what harm might she not make in the exercise of her dangerous wiles? for Valentine knew too well how little scruple there is in worldly ambition.

"Hermann has always plenty of money," mused Zitella, looking up at her companion with a smile that showed all her dazzling white teeth, "and when I am his wife," she continued, "I shall have plenty of it to spend, for I shall know all his secrets

then, and he will fear to refuse me anything. I shall not have to wait until he gives me a little present," and Zitella laughed as if the prospect of being able to spoil her future husband was very delightful.

Valentine felt almost sick for a moment; but the knowledge that she was mercenary could not make Zitella appear one whit less beautiful, and never had her beauty appeared so beautiful as it did now, looking up at her companion with her dark eyes glittering, and a lovely flush on her face; but there was a large share of contempt blended with Valentine's admiration. He put his hands in his pockets, and producing some coins of silver and gold threw them into the girl's lap.

"There," said he, lightly, "when you go to the town you can buy some pretty things, and when we meet again you can tell me if you've been any happier for this money."

But when Valentine rode away a few moments later he uttered the hope that he had seen the last of the gipsy girl.

A week or more passed; but though Valentine lingered on in the town the forest was never re-visited, and he saw no more of Zitella, who was completely forgotten, except at rare intervals, and then only thought of with unfeigned contempt and aversion as one who added another name to the long list of those who had brought him disappointment and disillusion.

"You've been a long time away, sir, and there's been somebody waiting in your private room for more than an hour." So Valentine Eyre was one afternoon accosted by his English servant on his return from a long ride.

"A person waiting to see me and in my private room?" asked Valentine, with barely suppressed anxiety. "How is this, Valence?" he continued, hurriedly, "did you get no name?"

Valence flushed crimson in fear of his master's displeasure, which he hastened to disarm by an ample apology.

"Indeed, sir, I hope I did not do wrong in admitting the youth, but he refused to give his name, only assuring me that his visit was a matter of life and death, and concerned your personal safety."

Valentine flung down his hat, riding whip and gloves, and hurrying past the man, reached and entered his private room.

As he crossed the threshold the occupant of the apartment rose to greet him, and Valentine stood still, lost in astonishment.

CHAPTER III.

In spite of the peasant boy's costume and closely cropped head Valentine recognised Zitella.

He uttered one astonished exclamation and then stood still, at a loss for words or power of movement, while Zitella advanced to meet him with no sign of confusion or shame in her face, though she glanced anxiously towards the door, and her hands were clasped with a supplicating gesture.

"Child, what mad folly is this?"

The question broke at last from Valentine, in hushed tones, but the words were scarcely uttered when he became conscious of the change which the last few days had wrought in Zitella's face; her cheeks had lost some of their rounded softness, and there were heavy, violet circles under the eyes, which had a wild, feverish expression, as if the girl were labouring under some strong excitement.

At Valentine's question Zitella's cheeks

and neck became suffused with crimson. She struggled with her emotion for some time, and then being conquered, hid her face in her hands, weeping bitterly, though silent, tears, during which she sank on the ground at the feet of Valentine, who gently raised and placed her in a chair.

"This folly is for your sake!" sobbed Zitella, when Valentine returned to her side, having secured the door against all intruders.

"Forgive me, my child," murmured Valentine, now repenting of his first ungentle words, and as he spoke he unconsciously laid his hand on the pretty head, now void of gear, and shorn of its magnificent wealth of amber tresses.

"For you! for you!" sobbed Zitella, through her clasped fingers.

"For me!" echoed Valentine, in rather cold, puzzled tones. He was hardening in the momentary conviction that this display of grief, was not genuine; but when Zitella's tears broke forth with renewed violence his chivalrous nature was deeply stirred, and tender words sprang of their own accord to his lips.

He took Zitella's hand in his, and assuring her that he was her friend, bade her unburden her heart of all its grief, and when Zitella once more reiterated the assurance that this daring adventure was for his sake, he implored of her to dry the eyes which were too lovely to be darkened with one single tear for him.

Zitella sat up, casting one fearful, anxious glance round the apartment, and at the door; then being assured that they were alone, and secure from all eavesdroppers, she forced herself to be calm, and laying her hand on Valentine's, looked up with tear dimmed eyes into his face.

"It is death to you," she whispered, "if you will not believe me, to me if you betray what I am now going to reveal! But first," and she seized her companion's hand, "be sworn to secrecy; swear to me by all you hold dear and sacred that you will obey me in all things, betray me in none."

Zitella's voice and looks and gestures were all full of the most intense and passionate excitement; but Valentine was not carried away by any of these. His first doubts returned in stronger tones, and he replied in cold and cautious tones that he would not be bound by any oath, but if Zitella could prove that she had come with a noble, generous motive, however rash or foolish, he would shield her with his life from the consequences.

Zitella's eyes flashed dangerously for a moment, her face flushed crimson, and then grew deadly pale.

"You do not trust me?" she exclaimed. "Ah, well, it will make no difference if I can only convince you of the danger in which you stand!"

There was such intense sorrow in the girl's tones, such fervent truth, that Valentine became at once ashamed of his doubts. He took her hand, saying earnestly,—

"Pardon me, Zitella. I do trust you implicitly, and, as a proof of this, I swear secrecy before I hear a word you have got to say."

"You promise this?"

"Most faithfully!"

Zitella drew a deep breath of relief.

"Now," she exclaimed, "I can fulfil my purpose without fear, but at any cost I would have done that."

She paused a moment then, as her hand tightened on her companion's, continued in hurried whispers,—

"You have heard me speak of Hermann. He loves me, but it is with a false and cruel love, and as he loves me so he hates you. He has sworn by an oath—that will not be lightly broken—to take your life—"

Valentine interrupted with a hasty exclamation of unfeigned astonishment. He withdrew his hand from Zitella's, feeling a return of his first mistrust; and as he gazed at the girl he questioned in tones that were no less searching than his glance.

"My life; Why should Hermann, the gipsy, lift his hand against me? I have done him no wrong!"

Zitella's downcast face was suffused with vivid blushes; but the fact that she avoided her companion's eyes betrayed no want of truth. It seemed natural that the young girl should feel embarrassed by the confession which she had undertaken to make.

"Hermann watches all my actions," she said in a low voice. "He saw us speak to one another the first day you rode through the forest, and again by the rivulet where you found me asleep."

This was all Zitella said; but her mantling cheek, her faltering tones, and downcast air, told a great deal that even Valentine could not fail to see.

He turned away sharply and walked through the room, until Zitella's voice suddenly raised brought him back to her side.

"Why did you disturb my life?" she cried in choking tones; "but for your words I should not yesterday have refused to become betrothed to Hermann. I should have thought of none but him, and knowing, fearing nothing, I should have been perfectly happy."

"Poor child," said Valentine, with deep and bitter self-reproach in his tones as he took one of the girl's small hands in his.

Zitella broke into passionate weeping.

"Yes, poor, poor Zitella!" she wailed between strangled sobs, "who has lost her old life for ever, her green wood, her foster-mother, her dreamless repose of heart, and all that made life dear, and Hermann," she added, rearing her head with a gesture half fierce, half despairing. "yes, even he is something to regret; so handsome, strong, and generous as he is!"

"Zitella, why must you forfeit all this?"

Valentine spoke absently, for his thoughts were absorbed in the lovely face, which now flushed with scorn at his lack of comprehension.

"Could I go back to those whom I have betrayed for your sake, or could I leave you to fall by the hand of Hermann, who, having learned that you leave this town to-night has planned to take your life as you ride all unsuspecting along the desert highway?"

Valentine thought of the revolvers which he always carried primed and loaded on his person, and involuntarily his hand reached and grasped one of the weapons; but reflecting it probably would have availed nothing against an ambush, he felt that he owed his life to Zitella's devotion.

"How shall I repay you for this—"

But Valentine's impetuous words were interrupted by Zitella, who started as if she had been stung. Her slender form shivered in the intensity of her scorn, as she stood before her companion, and flashing her splendid dark eyes upon him, said in tones whose haughty calmness seemed to chill her as they were uttered.

"Speak to others of reward, but not to me. The service which I have rendered you cannot be paid with money!"

"Zitella!" cried Valentine, in pained tones, "you misunderstand, I did not speak to you of the reward which I should offer to a hireling, but all you have done for me." He paused, as if overcome by emotion, then lightly touching the shorn head went on gently. "Even this sacrifice alone was too great."

Once more Zitella's face became all tender. She cast her eyes on the ground,

while soft warm blushes suffused her cheek.

"My hair will grow again," she murmured, softly, "but you—" she paused, and with an eloquent upward look, added earnestly, "a dead friend can never be won back."

Moved by an irresistible impulse Valentine stooped and imprinted a kiss on the girl's brow; but the act was scarcely accomplished ere Valentine recoiled in guilty terror, and gazing where his lips had pressed, fancied they left a crimson ineffaceable spot.

"Zitella, ask me to do something for you!" he cried, passionately, noticing the girl's livid cheek and the strange gleam in her lovely eyes.

"Think kindly of Zitella," was the reply, and the girl moved towards the door as she spoke; but Valentine springing forward stood between her and her goal.

"Zitella, child," he asked, "where are you going to?"

"Anywhere; I care not!" and the proud head drooped lower and lower beneath the man's gaze, "anywhere that Hermann cannot find me to avenge his betrayal, for whether you speak or not, he will know that it was Zitella who snatched his prize from him, and I am so young," she added, with a sob, "life is still dear."

"Zitella, life shall be dear, as dear as I can make it."

Valentine forgot all his past now in the passionate tide of feelings which swept over his soul. "Did you think," he continued, "that I would be so base as to let you go forth unprotected and alone? No, child, you have saved my life, and henceforth yours shall be my care. No father or brother could be more to you than I shall be," he added, fervently, as he drew towards himself the form which was all the more beautiful for its boyish disguise.

But Zitella drew herself away with feverish impatience.

"No, no, let me go!" she exclaimed, stretching out her hands with a gesture of repulsion. "You do not know, you must not ask, only let me go," she added, incoherently.

"Zitella, I will ask no questions, seek to know nothing," replied Valentine. "I have," he continued, "secrets in my own past which you, a child, cannot share; but you have for my sake abandoned your kindred, and I mean to take their place. Listen, my child," he took the girl's passive hand in his, "listen, while I unfold the plans which I have this moment made for your future."

Zitella trembled, but did not withdraw her hand, and Valentine went on.

"The other day, Zitella, you wished for knowledge and power. Well, you shall have the first placed at once within your reach, that is if you are willing to go to England—"

"With you?" interrupted Zitella, raising her eyes for one swift, eager glance.

Valentine hesitated a moment, but at last replied,—

"No, not with me. But as my ward you would go to England with a friend of mine, a noble young lady who is on the eve of starting from Madrid. Lady Fitzroy," continued Valentine, "would take you to London and place you in a school, where you would receive a first-class—. Why, what is this, Zitella?" for the girl, in a sudden paroxysm of pain, had flung herself on the ground at her companion's feet.

"Oh, I cannot go! I cannot leave you!" came in wild, broken utterances from the prostrate form on the floor. "I have sacrificed all for you. Let me stay here, anywhere by your side."

Poor Valentine! The moments which

followed were cruel. His heart and brain ached from the fierce conflict. He believed that this child loved him with such love as none had given before or would ever give him. But what an infamous scoundrel he would be to repay her self-sacrificing devotion by taking advantage of her innocence, and all that was noblest in him awoke. He triumphed over temptation, saying in gentle, but firm tones—

"Zitella, my child, you know not what you ask. How should you? You know nothing, nothing of the world—so quick to see so harsh to judge—"

"Let me stay with you," sobbed Zitella. "I care for nothing else so that I am by your side."

Valentine dared not look on the pleading face lest he should give way, but he raised the weeping girl and placed her tenderly in a chair.

"Zitella," he said, gently, "you are but a child. You cannot understand. Heaven knows," he added, bitterly, "how hard it is for me to refuse your innocent prayer, but did I grant it I should be doing you a wrong for which the world would punish you."

Zitella lifted her eyes and fixed them on Valentine's face with an air of wondering, innocent pain; then clasping her small hands she said, intreatingly—

"Leave me a moment or two. Go to the farther end of the room and stand where I cannot see you. When I want you again I will call you."

Valentine was prompt to obey this strange behest. He walked to the high, barred window and stood looking down into the narrow, gloomy street in which there was scarcely a person to be seen.

His heart was heavy with the forecast of evil, his brow marked with the scourge of an irretrievable past, but as he almost cursed the fate which had brought him across Zitella's path the sound of his name softly breathed brought him back to the girl's side.

He took her hand and looking into her face saw that in the last few moments some great change had occurred. She was quite calm and composed now, and the eyes which met his were dry and tearless.

"I know now," she said, softly, "how noble you are to refuse my prayer. I will obey your every command, go wherever you bid me."

She looked so lovely as she uttered these words that Valentine could scarcely refrain from pressing his lips once more to her brow, but he triumphed over the desire, and looking away from his companion, said in tones that sounded very cold and business-like in his own ears—

"If you are willing to go, Zitella, there is no time to be lost, for we have a two days' journey to Madrid, and I know that Lady Fitzroy starts at once for England."

"I cannot go like this," and Zitella blushed deeply as she looked down at her disguise.

Valentine thought a moment, then suggested that he should leave Zitella within locked doors, so that she should be safe and free from all intruders, while he went forth to purchase some garments suitable for her journey.

Zitella acquiesced more by looks than words, and having made his charge for the time being a captive, Valentine left his man Valence in charge, with injunctions to admit no visitor on any pretext whatever, and sallied forth on an expedition which was altogether new to him.

The resources of the town being slender, Valentine found much difficulty in procuring such garments as would be suitable to a young lady of rank, for it was the Englishman's intention to pass Zitella off as the

orphaned daughter of one Ferdinand de Leon, a friend of his lately deceased.

At length, having procured a suitable and somewhat costly outfit for his supposed ward, Valentine returned, and softly unlocking the door of his private apartment, entered, and found Zitella, fast asleep in a wide low chair.

Though time was precious, he would not wake her; but, stealing with noiseless steps to her side, stood as the minutes fled by gazing on that lovely face, the long, jetty lashes of sealed lids sweeping a cheek which contrasted well with the crimson velvet cushion on which the slumberer's head was reclining.

At length a noise in the corridor roused Zitella from her slumber, and, starting up, she gazed at Valentine with eyes in which for a moment there was no gleam of recognition.

"I have brought you some garments," said Valentine, in gentle tones. "I will go and see about a travelling carriage while you equip yourself," he added; and then, assuring the girl that there was no time to be lost, with a few more words the young man retired, locking the door as before; but when on returning after some time, he found recognition most difficult, for Zitella looked not only indescribably lovely, but altogether different from her former self in a rich velvet dress and black lace mantilla.

When the first stages of the journey were over, Valentine hired a female attendant for his ward.

The woman was middle-aged, and having met with sad reverses, looked on her engagement to Donna Zitella de Leon as a special stroke of fortune.

She accepted without question the story that Donna Zitella's former maid had succumbed to sudden illness on the road; and so, with well-veiled triumph, the gipsy girl bade farewell for ever to her former identity.

At Madrid the party found Lady Fitzroy, a stately, high-bred Englishwoman, who received Valentine Eyre very cordially, and for his sake condescended to smile, though felly, on Zitella; but when Valentine, not without secret pangs of conscience, had announced that his ward was the child of Don Ferdinand de Leon, her ladyship, who loved noble names, became very cordial to the gipsy girl, and when Valentine asked her as a favour to escort Zitella to England Lady Fitzroy was prompt to declare that the pleasure was all on her side.

"The poor child knows nothing," whispered Valentine, aside. "Her father has been guilty of culpable neglect towards his only child," continued the young man, wishing to account for Zitella's ignorance, which he knew the woman of the world would speedily discover.

"With that lovely face ignorance is pardonable," replied Lady Fitzroy, as she glanced at Zitella through her gold-rimmed eye-glasses. "The girl is most *distinguee*," she continued, "and so young, only a child. Depend upon it, she will grow into a charming woman."

"You are very gracious to say so," replied Valentine, feeling more conscience-stricken than ever at the fraud which he had practised. Her ladyship would draw in her skirts to save them from contact with a vagrant, was the young man's bitter thought.

Having arranged everything for Zitella, Valentine was anxious to take his departure, but Lady Fitzroy would not hear of this.

"We start in a few hours," she said, "but first there will be a repast of some kind, and in that you must join us. What, you want still to run away? Well, this is very

traitorous to our old friendship, when I owe you so much too for the pleasure which you have brought me in the companionship of this charming child."

Valentine's cheek flushed, and he was about to utter some hasty protest, when he was checked by the entrance of a servant, who announced that dinner was waiting in the adjoining room.

Valentine then had no choice but to offer his arm to his hostess, and as they lingered round the informal meal the young man forgot his treachery in a critical survey of Zitella which became every moment less and less anxious, for though the girl never once opened her lips, her mien and motion were faultless. One looked to the manner born, and her very silence seeming born of languor rendered her beauty more effective.

Valentine was beginning to congratulate himself on the success of his scheme when his hostess, leaning slightly forward, said in a clear tone,—

"You are so silent, Mr. Eyre, and there is so much I am anxious to hear. You have not told me one word of your charming wife?"

Valentine's face became livid. He felt though he steadily avoided meeting their glance, that Zitella's eyes had been swiftly raised to his.

Then, with his eyes on his plate, he replied to Lady Fitzroy's remark with these careless words,—

"Celia, my wife, is quite well, and I trust happy; but she is devoted to Cemema, while I"—with a short laugh—"am by nature a vagrant!"

"Like your father!" rejoined Lady Fitzroy; "but I hear he is greatly changed from the days in which I knew him. Then he was a thorough Bohemian; but you eat nothing, Mr. Eyre. Will you not be induced to take a little melon?"

And so the conversation was once more skilfully steered into harmless and pleasant channels.

The moment of parting had come, and was passed, and as Valentine lingered on the steps of the villa near Madrid, listening to the last roll of Lady Fitzroy's carriage wheels Zitella raised her eyes to the face of her companion, whom she addressed for the first time, and in very intelligible Spanish,—

"Mr. Eyre did not tell me that he was married. It is true," this was added after a pause, "that I have not known him long."

Lady Fitzroy looked thoughtfully at the girl, whose musical voice finished the charm which her loveliness had already begun.

"Valentine Eyre has a peculiar disposition," said Lady Fitzroy, at last, "and I fancy his marriage was not happy. It was never made very clear, but I heard some story of a ceremony having been performed in haste by the death bed of his uncle Don Juan de Nunax, and, I suppose, having married his cousin in haste, he has naturally repented at leisure; but with all his faults," added Lady Fitzroy, "kindly Valentine Eyre is really noble, and I am sorry if his life has been spoiled."

Zitella looked out of the carriage window with some remark on the beauty of the scenery through which they were passing.

She had no desire to pursue the subject of Valentine Eyre any further, and Lady Fitzroy could not help wondering at this indifference. She had been unfavourably impressed by the coldness of the girl's farewell to her guardian.

It was strange to see a southern nature so passionless, she thought, but Zitella was something more than passionless, she was sullen, though in a way which did not interfere with her power of fascination, and

lovely as were her eyes, there was a fitful and dangerous gleam in them which made her companion uncomfortable.

Those fingers looked formed to use a stiletto as I should a needle, was her ladyship's inward comment as she looked down at the hands which lay in Zitella's lap.

Meanwhile, Valentine, lingering still where his friends had left him, heard the lost carriage wheels replaced by the swift approach of horse's feet.

With the sound came a swift presentiment of ill, and the Englishman listened anxiously until a horseman appearing in the avenue gained his side in a few moments.

"Mr. Valentine Eyre?"

"The same."

And Valentine stretched eagerly to grasp the missive which the horseman eagerly tendered.

In an instant the seal was broken, and Valentine had read the few lines inclosed.

"Your wife's hours are numbered. If you would not be too late lose no time in coming!"

With a livid cheek and heavily beaded brow, Valentine rushed into the house crying hoarsely,—"Good Heaven! What have I done! My wife! Valentine, my horse without a moment's delay!"

There were a dozen to obey the call, and soon Valentine was in his saddle, and the fleet limbs of his steed had left the capital far behind.

(To be continued next week.)

MAYSIE.

BY JOSEPHINE FERROL.

[A NOVELETTE.]

COMPLETE IN THIS NUMBER.

CHAPTER I.

THE spring sunshine was glorifying the tall larches about Stretton's Farm, lighting up the copper beeches and silver-stemmed birches, the young greenery of the horse chestnut, the sycamore's waving branches rustling pleasantly in the scented breeze sweet with spring perfumes; the budding lilac, the starry primroses, the great clump of yellow daffodils; the gold, purple, and white of the crocuses, that were fast being succeeded by the sweet-smelling hyacinths, the white violets peeping out modestly from odd corners, all helped to perfume the breath of the bright May morning.

In the copse was every shade of green. The cornfields were decked in spring's favourite colour—the blades a grassy hue—that by-and-by would be transformed by the sun's hot rays into rolling waves of gold. Masses of white and pink May decked the hedges, and in the orchard the snowy blooms of the apple-trees glittered amongst the leaves, and the cherry and greengage trees reared a wealth of blossom, standing out in vivid relief against the darker background of foliage, while over the long, lone house climbed and trailed branches, that, just budding, gave promise of a wealth of roses and fuchsias later on.

"What a beautiful day!" Maysie Hartrey, standing under the old porch, looked up at the azure sky, where the white, fleecy clouds drifted slowly by, dotted here and there by a dark atom, the sky-haunting lark at her matins, and smiled.

"Stunning!" agreed the young man at her side, who, red in hand, was preparing to depart, and whip the waters of the river that meandered lazily through the meadows at the foot of their garden, for trout.

"Look at that robin!" pointing at one who sat in the edge, lamenting, in a shrill voice, that his winter finery had departed. "His red waistcoat has lost all its brightness!"

"Yes! That shows grim winter is a thing of the past."

"Of course! Only there are a heap of other things to show that. Aren't there, Ben?"

"Certainly there are!" agreed Ben at once, "this, for instance!" touching the pretty grey cotton gown she wore that seemed to match her grey eyes, and be just the most suitable appropriate thing in the world for her. "It's awfully grand!"

"Nonsense! I made it myself, and it cost me just ten shillings," and Maysie Hartrey piquetted to show her brother the dress from every point of view.

"I don't care what it cost, it's just jolly, and suits you famously," declared the young fellow, looking at her with honest admiration in his eyes.

"You old flatterer!" she answered, with a soft smile, clapping her hands round his arm. "You think everything I wear is perfection."

"Of course I do," he declared stoutly.

"You always look nice!"

"In your eyes. Not in other peoples."

"I know some other people who think more of you than I do."

"Indeed! Who are they?" she asked, without the slight addition of colour in her smooth cheeks.

"I'm not going to tell tales," he rejoined, significantly.

"You couldn't. It's all nonsense, Ben!"

"No, it isn't. But I won't split. Now come out with me, Maysie!"

"I can't!" with a shake of the fair head.

"Why not? It's a shame to lose such a lovely morning. Just think how beautiful it will be down there!" nodding towards the river. "The sunlight sparkling in ripples along the shallows, the white cloudlets drifting overhead, the birds singing, the breeze swaying the budding branches, the—"

"Why, Ben, you are getting quite poetical! What is the meaning of it?" with a quick glance at him from the long-fringed, clear eyes.

"Am I?" he laughed a little awkwardly, "Oh, it's the weather. You won't think me poetical when I come back with a brace or two of pearly-sealed trout."

"No! I shall think you practical and useful then, as they will go towards filling our rather empty larder."

"You won't come, then?"

"I can't. Don't you forget that I have a guest coming to luncheon with me to-day?"

"Have you? You never told me anything about it."

"Ben! How can you?"

"How can I what?" with a lazy glance at her, as he arranged a fly to his liking in his book.

"Say that I told you a week ago Max Roy was coming here to-day—that he wished to consult me on some matter."

"Oh!" Ben Hartrey turned round and gave his sister a keen look full of interest. "I see. I think I remember something about it. Do you wish me stay at home and preside at the festive board?"

"No. It is not necessary," she answered, composedly.

"I suppose not, with such an old and intimate friend as Max. Do you know—have you any idea what he is coming about?"

"No. Perhaps it is the mortgage on Arthur's part of the farm. You know there is still a hundred owing."

"Yes, I know," and he met the frank

glance of her clear, childlike eyes, and saw that she did not even guess at what was running in his mind. "He, of course, will advise you well," he added, slowly, "He is so clever, such a thorough man of business."

"Oh, yes! I shall follow his advice."

"Do," and with a kiss Ben Hartrey went away towards the river; and Maysie, after gathering a few violets and fastening them in the bosom of her gown, went into the quaint old house that had been her home all the days of her young life, and busied herself in preparations for her expected guest.

These preparations were neither numerous nor on a grand scale. Grandeur was beyond the limits of her slender purse, and she never exceeded the amount she and Ben agreed upon for housekeeping.

She had a horror of debt, a dread of it; and no wonder, for her handsome, good-for-nothing father had been a spendthrift, and had squandered his children's inheritance, until at his death nothing was left except the old homestead, "Stretton's Farm," which had been left to his wife by an uncle, and which she wisely had tied up securely for her two children, saying that for them out of the wreck of their fortune. She did not long survive her husband, and Ben and Maysie were left to set up housekeeping alone when he was seventeen and she fourteen, along with old Betsy Raymond, formerly Mrs. Hartrey's nurse, who stuck to them through all their misfortunes, and declared she would never leave the "childther" while there was a breath in her body.

She was a great comfort to the young girl, and helped to steer their bark through stormy waters, and by her economy and cleverness enabled Ben to pay off two of the three hundred that was required to purchase the choice piece of meadowland around the homestead, without which it was practically useless, as it could not be farmed in a satisfactory manner unless grazing land for cattle was secured.

In this good work Betsy was ably helped by Max Roy, son of a neighbouring gentleman-farmer of good means, who had set his only son up as a lawyer in Shelatons, five miles distant, where the young fellow, owing to his ability and pleasant ways, was getting on splendidly, and bid fair soon to have the largest clientele in the place, and distance all competitors in the legal line.

Max Roy and his sister Blanche had been playmates of the little Hartreys from a very early age, and Max had learnt to love grey-eyed Maysie almost before he wore jackboots and topers. It was the one wish of his life to make her his wife, the one desire that urged him on to do great things, to win fame and honour, in order that she might be pleased, might be proud of him.

That she was proud of him he had no doubt. She openly told him how much she thought of him. That she loved him—ah, well, that was a different matter altogether, and he was by no means certain that this bonny, grey-eyed lassie did love him as he wished to be loved. They had been so much together, so much like brother and sister, so used to each other, "what wonder," he thought, "if this girl, this almost child"—for she was only just eighteen—"should have no warmer feeling for him than she entertained for Ben." She was just as frank and unembarrassed in her intercourse with him as she was with her brother; and though he had thrown out several hints they hardly seemed to be taken, or at any rate understood by Miss Hartrey, and so he determined to "put it to the touch," to "win or lose all," and he was coming up to the homestead this bright May morning to ask her to be his wife.

"Heaven bless my darling!" he murmured, as he came in sight of the house, and looked eagerly for a glimpse of her.

But there was nothing to be seen save the rambling old place, with its decoration of ivy and trailing branches, its queer chimney stacks, from one of which issued a thin wreath of smoke, its empty dog-kennels and silent stables, and emerald lawn studded with noble trees, and weed-grown paths, and semi-neglected flower beds, and general air of picturesque untidiness that spoke only too plainly of want of money and care.

As Max pulled the bell the clangour rang out on the silence, and before it died away Maysie stood in the open doorway.

"Why didn't you come in?" she queried, holding out a cool little hand, which he held in his strong, warm clasp rather longer than was absolutely necessary.

"You hardly gave me time," he answered, with a smile, that somehow or other lighted up the honest, sunburnt face and blue eyes in a wonderful manner—made it almost good-looking.

"The door was open; surely you know as well enough to come in without ringing."

"I hope I do!" he laughed. "Only you see I thought you might be out."

"When I expected you, Max!" looking at him with a world of reproach in the lovely grey eyes, that were just the dearest things to him in all creation.

"Certainly. You might have been in the garden gathering dainties wherewith to regale me."

"And if so, what then? Betsy is here."

"I did not come to see Betsy," pointedly. "Don't tell her so, poor old soul. You know she adores you!"

"I wish you did," he muttered.

"What did you say?" she inquired, as she led the way to the quaint, oak-panelled parlour, where places were laid for two, and the sun-blinds shut out the glare and made it cool and pleasant, and the perfume of wallflowers and violets mingled sweetly.

"Nothing," he answered, audaciously, taking his place opposite her at the table, and commencing operations on some cold salmon that was before him.

"What was it you wanted to see me about," she asked, when they had discussed the salmon, the cranberry tart, the custards, and other homely dainties prepared by her.

"Something very important; that is, to me," he added, as she turned a pair of startled eyes on him. "Something that concerns myself."

"Oh! Are you going to buy some property about here?"

"No. My father has given me Lowndes Rest, so I shall never want for a home."

"That pretty place! Oh, Max! aren't you delighted?" she exclaimed, with flushing cheeks and sparkling eyes.

"Yes," he said, thoughtfully; "I suppose I am."

"You don't seem to care."

"Yes, I do. Only you see the present is incomplete."

"How? The house is furnished."

"True, the house is furnished, but there is one thing lacking."

"What is it?"

"Can't you guess?" leaning forward, and looking straight down into the soft, grey eyes.

"No. How can I?"

"Then shall I tell you?"

"Please."

"It wants a mistress."

"You can easily remedy that," she said composedly. "There are many nice girls in Shelbourn. Of course, you will marry now that you have a house of your own."

"Yes, I shall marry," he responded, slowly, a chill sense of disappointment strong on him at her words and her unconcern, "that is, if the right woman will have me."

"Have you asked her?" she inquired, looking up at him with childish curiosity.

"Not yet," he answered, and then broke out, "Maysie, don't you know, can't you see—it is you I love. Can you ever care for me?"

"Max," the startled eyes met his bewilderedly.

They were standing by the open window, round which the budding creeper crept and clung, and he bent over her, and took her hand in his, and looked at her, all his love shining in his honest eyes.

"Don't be startled, dear! I did not mean to speak so abruptly, only—I could not help it. Look up, child, and tell me you care for me."

For answer Maysie shook her flaxen head.

"You don't care for me?" he cried.

"I do like you, Max, but—but not as you mean."

"Maysie, think before you decide. It is so much to me, the whole happiness of my life depends upon your answer," he urged earnestly.

And she remained silent. She hardly understood his passionate appeal; it almost frightened her. She was only eighteen, and had never been wooed, never listened to a lover's words. What wonder they disturbed her sleeping innocence, her dreaming calm? And then—like all young girls—she had a romantic notion that a lover should be very handsome, and very fascinating—a kind of Sir Galahad and Adonis rolled into one; and this country lawyer was only sensible and honest, and kind, with a plain, good-natured face and frank blue eyes, and was not mightily particular as to the set of his cravat, or the cut of his coat, and did not wear patent leather boots, nor extremely shiny stove-pipe hats, nor lavender kid gloves, but contented himself with thick shooting boots, and a deerstalker, and seldom or never sported a pair of gloves, his strong, sunburnt hands on most occasions being guiltless of any covering; and he was not glib of tongue, nor ready with honied speeches and compliments, so, altogether, he was hardly likely to win the regard of a young girl who had never taken the trouble to study his deep, earnest nature, and find out all the good qualities, and amiability that underlay the rugged exterior, and reflect what a gentle, tender, devoted husband he would make.

"Maysie, think!" he repeated, his voice trembling with anxiety. "I love you so dearly, can't you care for me a little?"

"I hardly think so," she answered, dreamily, and there was no responsive love-light in the grey eyes.

"You are so young—in time you may," he pleaded. "I will wait as long as you wish."

"Would waiting make any difference?" she asked, naively.

"It might," he replied, at once. "Women sometimes grow to care very dearly for a man when he becomes their affianced husband, though different before."

"I am not indifferent, Max, only—"

"Only you are not desperately in love with me at present," he said gaily.

"No!" and she smiled up at him. "If you waited, do you think—I should—grow to—"

"Love me!" he puts in. "I hope so. Will you try? I'll wait just as long as you wish, and I won't bother you only when you know. If it is to be as I wish come to me and say, 'Max, I love you.' Will you?"

She hesitated just the length of a moment, and then said, "yes;"

"My dearest!" and lifting her hands he kissed them tenderly.

"And now for the ring. It is an old family one, and said to be a Milprene!"

"What is that?" she asked, looking curiously at the antique ring he drew from his pocket.

"It is supposed to be formed by the breath of a snake. When struck by a hazel wand they hiss, and the bubble that forms hardens at once into a stone. The possessor becomes wealthy, and the old tradition says—loses love."

"Then I will not have it!" she exclaimed, drawing back, as he offered to put it on her finger.

"But you do not love me—yet," he smiled.

"I may—and—if I take this I shall lose my chance of doing so—have to give up all hope."

"No, Maysie. It is only he or she who already loves becoming the possessor of this who is in danger of losing it."

"Are you sure?" she asked, with grave anxiety depicted on her pretty winsome face.

"Quite sure!"

"Who told you this tradition about the Milprene?"

"My old nurse, Bridget O'Connor. Do you remember her?"

"Oh, yes, well! She was tall, and wrinkled, and gaunt, her skin like parchment; but her eyes were wonderfully bright, and a beautiful blue."

"Yes! Her head was crammed full of queer tales and traditions of her own country."

"And were they all as weird as this?"

"Mostly. Some more so. She had one about a banshee that was absolutely blood-curdling, and she imitated the wailing of the spirit perfectly."

"What was it like?" she demanded, regarding him with dilated eyes.

"Like the sighing and moaning of the wind through leafless branches, on a still, chill winter's night."

"How horrible!" with an irresistible shudder.

"I did not think so in those days. I liked her weird stories, and begged for them nightly."

"A morbid taste, Max!"

"Perhaps. I don't think I should care for them now!"

"You would prefer something morrier?"

"Infinitely!"

"I am sorry you told me about this," she went on, after a pause, twirling the ring slowly round, and regarding it somewhat as she might one of the snakes from whose breath it was said to be formed.

"Why?"

"Because—I shall never feel happy when I am wearing it."

"Dear child, don't think about that foolish story."

"I shall never be able to help doing so now. Let me have another one, Max, please?" she implored.

"Nay, keep it, dearest," he whispered, in his tenderest, softest tone, as he looked in her fair face; "and then when you do learn to care for me the triumph will be greater," and he slipped it on the slim finger, and she was passive, and let it remain there.

This was something gained he thought joyfully. She kept his ring and promised to try and care for him, and he went away feeling a certain amount of contentment, though not quite satisfied; and many were the glances he sent back to the slight, girlish figure standing in the leaf-wreathed porch, in its gray gown, with a knot of

white violets at the breast, and the spring sunshine making a halo all round.

CHAPTER II.

"Ben, you are lazy!"

Ben only shook his head, and pointed to a trio of silver-sided trout that lay on the grass beside him.

"Get up, and do some more fishing."

"No thank you. I prefer remaining here," and he let his head droop back into his companion's lap.

"It is simply disgraceful. You get more and more idle every day."

"And who is it helps me to be idle?" he asked lazily, with an upward glance at the pretty gipsy-like face bending over him.

"Certainly I don't," declared Blanche Roy, indignantly. "I am always wanting you to exert yourself—now, in the present instance."

"Well, dear, in the present instance," he interrupted, tranquilly, "the wind blows too strongly up-stream, and my flies would be blown away. I might sit, rod in hand, for hours and catch nothing. Besides, I am extremely comfortable."

"I have a good mind to go away and leave you."

"You wouldn't be so cruel," he murmured, plaintively.

"I don't know. I think I may be. Now, when we are married do you mean to idle like this?"

"No, I am too much of a pauper to be able to."

"You're not a pauper, Ben," she corrected.

"Next door to it. I wonder Blanche, will your father ever consent to your marrying a poor fellow like me?"

"He must. I shall make him!" and she lifted her dark head with imperious grace, "and I have more than enough for both."

"Yes, that's just it," he said ruefully.

"It's your money that comes between us, and makes the barrier that is likely to keep us apart. If you had none I should go boldly to Mr. Roy and ask him to give you to me, and take you home to the farm. As it is, I haven't the courage to ask him to let you live in such a tumble-down place."

"At any rate, I mean to live in that tumble-down place."

"Now if it were called Ker Hall it would be different."

"Not to me; and talking of the Hall do you know that Lord George Kerwin arrived there this morning with a friend, no end of a dandy, in the household troops?"

"No, I did not know it," groaned poor Ben, "but it will be all the worse for me. Your father will contrast unfavourably if he wants to marry you."

"Don't talk rubbish; and Ben, don't you remember last year when Lord George was down here that he had eyes for none but Maysie?"

"Yes, I do remember that he seemed rather spooney on her," admitted Ben, in slightly relieved tones.

"Rather 'spooney!'" ejaculated his companion, "Why, he was mad about her, only she never seemed to take the least notice of it and the old Earl was alive then, and of course would not have liked it; he was so conservative, thought people ought to marry in their own rank in life, and, moreover, liked money. All his daughters married wealthy men. I have, thought, that Maysie won't have him."

"Do you?"

"I do. Max would be miserable then."

"Ah! I see. He's gone there to-day," nodding towards the Homestead.

"Yes, I hope he'll succeed."

"Does the governor know?"

"I think so. He has given him Lowndes Rest."

"That looks as though he thought Max meant marriage, and as if he approved."

"Yes, doesn't it?"

"I hope he'll be as complaisant over us, Blanche."

"So do I. Have courage, Ben. Remember 'Faint heart,' &c."

"Yes, I must pull my courage together, and storm the sire before long."

"Perhaps it would be best to get matters settled," agreed Miss Roy; and then the young people sauntered off under the budding copper beeches towards her home.

"Miss Maysie, may we come in?"

Maysie looked up with a start. She was sitting by the window—that identical window where Max had told her of his love, just a week before—engaged in the homely occupation of darning Ben's socks, and for a moment the brilliant sunshine dazzled her eyes; and then she saw Lord George Kerwin bending down to look in at the window, and, standing beside him, a tall, dark man, with a bronzed face and heavy black moustache, and black eyes, whom she felt was different from any man she had ever seen during her short life.

"May we come in?" repeated her visitor.

"Oh, yes, of course!" she said, rising in some confusion, and away went the basket of socks, the balls of wool flying here and there, and the scissors rattling down on the polished floor with a clatter that made the old black cat, slumbering at her feet, jump up and hurry off as though she thought the end of the world had come.

"I am afraid we have startled you?" remarked Lord George, as he stepped through the window, followed by his companion.

"You did a little," she acknowledged, shyly, with drooping lids and flushing cheeks, for the stranger's dark eyes were fastened on her face, and confused her.

"I am so sorry," went on the young lord, regret and concern on his handsome, boyish face. "I didn't mean to. Only I was anxious to renew our acquaintance, and Hartrey told me you were here, so I did not go to the door, but came straight here. I hope you will forgive me?"

"There is nothing to forgive!" she answered, simply. "You were quite right to do so!"

"Thanks; and now may I introduce my friend?"

"I shall be pleased!" she murmured.

"Mr. Derringer, Miss Hartrey!"

"Charmed to make your acquaintance!" declared Derringer, in a pleasant voice, taking her reluctant little hand in his, and thinking, as he looked at her, that he had never seen anything more fair and sweet than this girl's innocent face, with its frame of flaxen hair, straying in rings and curls over the white forehead, and delicate shell-like ears.

"I hope you won't think us an intruder?"

"Oh, no!" she answered, smiling up at him with soft, shy eyes.

"I feel like one!" he declared with a laugh.

"Why?" asked Lord George.

"Because you and Miss Hartrey are old friends, and, of course, have no end to talk about, while I am a stranger, and out in the cold."

"You must not say—that!" she stammered.

"It's partly true!" declared Kerwin.

"Of course we have a great deal to talk about. I want to hear how Jenny got on—whether Rob recovered from his bad fall—whether you still have the fox we caught;

and whether the speckled hen brought up her brood of ducklings well."

"Beautifully!" declared Maysie, enthusiastically, forgetting her shyness; "she has some more to bring up now. Oh, they give her so much trouble. They will go off to the pond."

"Naturally. Their instinct takes them there!"

"Yes; it is as natural for them to go to the water," struck in the cavalryman, "as it is for a fellow to look and look, and look again at a pretty face," and he pointed his speech by staring at his hostess.

"Some natural instincts are not pleasant," observed Lord George, drily, by way of a hint to his friend; for he saw Maysie flush, and look embarrassed. "You must show me the ducklings by-and-by!"

"Yes; and Jenny and her calf."

"And of course Jenny!" he agreed.

"And may I come, too?" inquired the irrepressible Derringer who, being an Irishman, was possessed of an amount of coolness and impudence that astonished most people.

"Oh, yes, if you care to!" she answered.

"Care to!" he repeated. "Why, I take a most lively interest in all rural matters, especially when there is an uncommonly pretty girl in the way!" he added, in low tones.

"Do you?" she said, innocently. "Are you country-bred then?"

"No; I was born in Dublin, and have lived in cities all my life!"

"How odd you should care for the country."

"Yes, isn't it?" he agreed, gravely. "It's the change, I suppose. Everyone likes change!"

"At any rate, you do!" remarked Lord George, rather testily. "You change your friends, your dogs, your tastes regularly once a week!"

"Too severe, my dear fellow," he answered lazily lolling back in the old chipendale chair, his handsome head against the carved back; "and not strictly true. How long have I known you?"

"Five years," admitted the other, reluctantly.

"And I have never changed you. So that refutes your libel!"

"Ah, but it's slightly different with me!" exclaimed Kerwin. "You are going to be re—"

"What lovely flowers!" broke in Derringer, quickly, leaning forward and touching a vase of crimson blossoms that stood on the table at Maysie's elbow.

"Yes, they are pretty."

"From your garden?"

"Yes."

"I hope you will take us round and let us see all its beauties—that is, me, let me see. Of course Kerwin is familiar with it all?"

"Of course," agreed the young fellow; "but I shall come and see it again, nevertheless."

"Yes, do," and Maysie gave him a sweet smile that sent the blood coursing madly through his veins, for he loved this little simple country maiden very tenderly, and wished to make her learn to care for him.

So the three went out together into the glow and brilliance of the May morning, and she showed them the speckled hen, who, cooped up, was thrusting her neck through the bars, and clucking vigorously in her endeavours to prevent her alien brood of fluffy children from paddling about in the pond, and Jenny, the tiny Kerry cow, and her diminutive calf, and Rob the cart-horse, and the red rogue who was kept in the kennels, where he had a fine run; and then they went back to the old panelled parlour, and Betsy brought in tea and some early strawberries, and fresh, sweet cream and

home-made cakes, and they had a right-down, merry meal, at which Ben assisted, for he had come in from his usual fishing expedition; and while he and Lord George talked of flies, and floats, and trout, and salmon, and the dangers of the weir, and the proximity to it of the stepping-stones, which in the autumn after heavy rains made the crossing them such a dangerous and difficult feat, Mr. Derringer improved the golden opportunity, and talked well and fascinatingly to the innocent young creature whom fate had thrown in his way, and thought that after all a few weeks spent in the country in her society would not be at all dull.

She looked so sweet and fair in the grey dress, with a bunch of violets under the white, dimpled chin, her grey eyes shining brightly, a rose-flush on her cheek as she listened to his stories of London life, and his account of his own recent illness, that had made the doctors order him away from town to recuperate in the quiet of the country.

And that night, when Maysie went to bed, she dreamed that Lord George, Mr. Derringer, and Max Roy were engaged in a three-cornered duel, and that though she was standing near she seemed to have lost the power of volition and was rooted to the spot; even when Max ran Derringer through the heart with his sword she could not move. Only she saw distinctly his white face turned up to Heaven, and the cold moonbeams playing on it as he lay stretched out on the soft, green sward, the blood welling from the wound in his breast.

CHAPTER III.

It was quite wonderful, after that afternoon, what a fancy the cavalry man took to Stretton's Farm. Hardly a day passed that he was not there on some pretext or other. Now it was to consult Ben about a rod or a fly, now to bring a book of poems to Maysie; then he would drop in shortly before their tea-hour, and declare plainly that Kerwin had deserted him as usual and left him to amuse himself, while he went about among his tenants and sought to set things straight on his estate; and then Ben, taking pity on his loneliness would ask him to stay, and the Irishman eagerly accepted the invitations, and would linger at the farm until late into the night, singing duets with Maysie, looking into her soft eyes, paying compliments, and saying things that might mean a great deal or nothing at all, but that, nevertheless, brought the blood to her fair cheek and made the heavy lids droop.

Maysie liked his society, liked to hear him talk. He was so different from any one she had ever met, so different from poor, plain Max. But then he was only an honest, straightforward, country-bred lawyer, not a *blase*, world-worn man of fashion, whose scruples were few and code of honour shaky, and thought, after all, it did not matter much if he did flirt a little, just to pass the time with this deliciously fresh, naive little maiden, whose soft young beauty was so alluring to him, though he had heard a rumour that coupled her name with Roy's.

What did that matter, though? No one would be any the worse, he told himself hypocritically, for the few pleasant hours he spent at the farm with Maysie Hartrey, and Roy was only a country bumpkin.

Few! He hardly knew himself how frequently he went. It so soon became a habit with him to saunter over there, and drop into the great armchair by the rose-framed window opposite her, and chat away through a whole morning while she stitched industriously; and often, very often, he re-

appeared in the evening, sometimes in his dress clothes, looking so handsome and elegant, the girl thought, with the diamond studs flashing on his breast, and a gardenia in his button-hole.

"How different from Max!" she murmured to herself, one sultry night, when she and Ben had walked to the end of their own demesne with him, looking after his retreating figure, and giving a thought to the man to whom she had given her promise to try and care for.

"I wonder why he always comes alone now?" remarked Ben, reflectively, also staring after the tall, retreating figure.

"I don't know! Unless it is that Lord George does not care to come here now!" returned Maysie.

"I don't think that is the reason!" said her brother, slowly; and he looked at her fair face with perturbed eyes.

He knew Max loved her—he suspected Kerwin of having a tenderness; and now here was this officer, this weary, fashionable dragoon, paying constant visits to the old homestead, and passing every moment he could in her society. He didn't understand it quite, and he determined to consult Blanche on the morrow.

"Then what is it?" queried the girl plucking a great creamy rose from its stem, and fastening it just under her dimpled chin.

"I can't tell!" he rejoined, somewhat curtly.

Indeed, so differently from his usual urbane manner that she looked at him in surprise, and ceased plucking to pieces the fellow-blossom to that which she had fastened at her collar.

"Ben, you're out of temper!"

"No; I'm not!" he contradicted testily, annoyed to think she had noticed anything strange in his manner.

"My dear, you are!" she insisted, with pretty gravity, laying her hand on his arm.

"Now, tell me what it is?"

"How can I, when there isn't anything?" he asked, trying to look unconscious, and as though he was speaking the truth.

"Now, Ben, you are fibbing!"

"You're fanciful, Maysie."

"Not a bit! I know you well enough to be aware that something has rubbed you the wrong way, brother mine! Now, do tell me what it is!" coaxingly. "Let me share your trouble, and lighten it if I can!"

"My dear little woman," he said, tenderly, stroking the small hand that lay on his coat-sleeve. "My joys I am always ready to share with you, my prosperity, my pleasure, not my troubles, and adversities."

"How unkind!" she exclaimed, reproachfully, turning away; the next moment she was clasping his hand, and exclaiming, "are you really in trouble. Ben, *has*—Mr. Roy refused his consent to your marriage with Blanche?"

"No, Maysie, not yet!"

"I am so glad," with a long-drawn breath of relief. "I was afraid you had been to see him, and that his answer was unfavourable."

"I daresay it will be when it comes to the point," he rejoined, a trifle moodily.

"You must hope for the best!" she said, brightly, regarding him with tender, moist eyes.

"It's hard sometimes to hope when everything seems against a fellow."

"But everything is not against you," she expostulated.

"A good deal is!"

"How?"

"I am next door to a pauper."

"Nonsense! You have this homestead!"

"It's half yours."

"Only nominally. You know I gave my share of it over to you long ago."

"Dear child, as though I could take it," he smiled.

"You must," she rejoined, eagerly. "It is a place any man might be proud to own if—"

"If three or four hundred pounds could be spent on it," he broke in.

"Less than that, and Arthur's part is nearly purchased now."

"Seventy-five pounds remains yet to be paid!"

"That is not a great deal; and Mr. Roy would, of course, act liberally towards Blanche, being rich."

"And expect me to do the same, which, being poor, I couldn't."

"You seem to forget that Blanche loves you."

"No, I don't. That is my trump card, and about the only hope I have. If he is willing Max should marry you—"

"Ben, how do you know that?" interrupted Maysie, flushing scarlet.

"Blanche told me, dear," he muttered apologetically. "Her father gave Max Lowndes Rest because he told him he meant to marry, and the governor more than suspects who the wished for bride is."

"In that case," she remarked, after an awkward pause, and in tones that sounded strange and cold even to herself, "he, of course, can have no possible objection to you as son-in-law."

"I hope not," he responded, kissing her upturned face as she wished him good-bye.

Meanwhile Derringer reached the Hall, and found Lord George waiting up for him in the smoking-room, a gloomy look on his boyish, frank face.

"You're rather late," he commenced, glancing at the timepiece, the hand of which pointed to 12.30.

"Am I?" said the other, indifferently, throwing himself into a chair and nipping the end off a cigar.

"I think so, for the country. Have you been at the Farm?" he asked, after a short silence.

"Yes."

"You go there pretty often," with an angry look in his blue eyes.

"Every day."

"It is to be hoped you are welcome," drily.

"I think I am," returned Derringer, with a laugh that grated on his listener's ears.

"At any rate, to the lady!"

"Paul," said Lord George, in husky tones, "have you thought of what you are doing?"

"Doing! my dear fellow!" looking at him with affected surprise, "How? What? Why?"

"You are playing fast-and-loose with an innocent creature who is no match for you!"

"Nonsense, George!" while an angry flush mounted to his forehead, "what rubbish you talk!"

"It is not nonsense. You are not free; you have no right to try and win her love, and to-day I heard"—here the young fellow's voice trembled—"that she is engaged to Max Roy."

"And what if she is? I am doing no harm passing a few pleasant hours in her society."

"Is that all? Are you certain she is safe? Certain that she will not grow to care for you?"

"Of course! She is too sensible for that."

"I am not so sure. The last time I went to the Homestead with you she flushed up when you spoke to her, and then paled sud-

denly. It looked as though you were not quite indifferent to her."

"And I hope I'm not!" broke out Derringer, impetuously. "She's just the fairest, sweetest little thing I ever came across!"

"Paul!" said the other, sternly, "do you mean to act like a scoundrel?"

"I hope not."

"What would Lady Grace say if she knew of this?"

"Nothing!" he replied, with some slight embarrassment. "Lady Grace is a woman of the world, and does not expect me to keep my eyes and admiration only for her!"

"Perhaps not. Still my cousin might not like your openly making love to another woman. She might prefer to have your society herself."

"You mean by that, George," looking at him steadily, "that you think I had better leave this place?"

"I do."

"Well—I can't stay if you turn me out," the other said, turning restlessly on his chair.

"I shall not turn you out, of course, but I think it will be better for all parties that you should go."

"In another month I will," he said, slowly. "I can't go before."

"You are harder hit than you think for," said Lord George.

"Perhaps I am," agreed Derringer, sullenly.

CHAPTER IV.

"WHAT does it mean, Blanche!" asked Ben of his lady-love, as they paced, the next day, under the copper beeches down by the river-side.

"Maysie is very sweet and pretty, Ben!"

"Yes?" looking at her interrogatively with his bright grey eyes.

"And he is at the homestead, you say often?"

"Every day, sometimes twice a day."

"Then it looks to me as though he likes her, and as though Lord George disapproved of it, so won't accompany him."

"Oh, Blanche, nonsense."

"It isn't nonsense," with an indignant stamp of her foot, "and you ought to stop it for Max's sake."

"How can I?"

"Tell him not to come and visit at your house."

"I can't do that," helplessly.

"Then snub him well."

"Shall I?" doubtfully.

"Of course. Show him his visits are not welcome, and if he has an atom of manliness or spirit about him he won't appear at the homestead again."

"I shouldn't."

"Naturally not, and he must make an effort for poor old Max's sake. He wouldn't care to live without her, I know, and he has looked so moody lately that I more than suspect some hint of the state of affairs has reached him. It is a great shame," she went on, impetuously, "that a worthless, good-for-nothing flirt such as he is should come here, amuse himself for a time, unsettle Maysie, and ruin another man's whole life."

"It won't be as bad as that," expostulated Ben.

"Oh, yes, it will. Paul Derringer is dangerously fascinating, that I must allow. His flatteries and compliments will dazzle Maysie for the time, and she will appear not to care for Max."

"Then you think she does care for him?"

"I am sure she does. She is unconscious how much she really cares for him. All would have gone well if that man," meaning

Derringer, "had not had the misfortune to come here and turn her head with his nonsense."

"I hope he'll go soon."

"So do I; but, of course, he won't until after Lady Lethwicke's dance."

"I suppose not," moodily.

"You may be certain about that. Fancy the opportunity it will be for breathing soft nothings into Maysie's ear!"

"He shan't have a chance," growled Ben.

"You won't be able to help the chances, dear boy," remarked his intended, coolly.

"Why not?"

"Just reflect. At a dance, what can you do?"

"Keep close to her side all night."

"I should hardly like that," with an arch glance at him, "nor Max."

"No, of course not. How stupid I am. Well, I will forbid her to dance with him."

"That plan will never answer with a girl of Maysie's calibre."

"Well—shall we stay away altogether?" with a helpless look of inquiry at his fiancée.

"You can't do that after accepting Lady Lethwicke's invitation, can you?"

"Hardly, I suppose," he agreed, despondently. "What can I do?"

"Give her a few judicious hints if you can."

"Yes."

"And Max will be there to mount guard."

"He knows, suspects nothing, does he?"

"I hope and think not. He is so busy; he is always sure to be the last to hear any piece of scandal, no matter how near it may concern him."

"This would very nearly."

"Yes, indeed. It would wound him to the quick."

"I wonder why women always choose dress and pass by pure gold?" he remarked, reflectively.

"They don't *always*," she expostulated, with a meaning and adoring glance at him.

"Generally," he answered, smiling down at her.

"Certainly, Maysie has."

"She is only dazzled, Ben, and flattered by Paul Derringer's attentions. I am certain she cares nothing for him."

"I hope you are right."

"I am sure I am."

"I hope so. Only she may not find it out until it is too late."

"What do you mean?" asked his companion, a touch of uneasiness in her voice and manner.

"I mean," he said slowly, and thoughtfully, "that Derringer may persuade her to marry him, and then, when marriage has opened her eyes to his many faults and imperfections, she may realise that her affections were really given to Max."

"You are right in this supposition, and I hope and pray she may not be induced, by any of his subtleties and flatteries to become his wife. I shudder at the mere thought of what her life would be, and Max's unhappiness. Poor fellow he is simply wrapped up in her. She is his thought by day, his dream by night."

"I think she is, and yet she blindly passes his great love by, and allows herself to be fascinated by this puppy, this mean-souled, dishonourable fellow, who isn't worthy to tie Max's shoe-strings."

"Oh, if the gallant dragoon could only hear you!" exclaimed Miss Roy, with a delicious bubble of laughter, adding more seriously, "she is not to blame; she is little more than a child!"

"And quite as troublesome as one," he rejoined irritably, for he felt sure his dearly-loved sister would somehow or the other come to grief, and wreck her happiness over Paul Derringer, and he couldn't

for the life of him see clearly how to prevent it. Women at best were but "Kittencattle," and if he abused him to her she would consider him ill-used and elevate him to the dignity of a hero, hints she would probably be deaf and indifferent to, while if he left matters alone there was no knowing where or how they would end. Altogether he was in anything save a happy frame of mind, and was staring moodily across the green expanse, to where the river glistened and sparkled along, when an angry exclamation from Blanche made him look up quickly.

"There he is!" she said, nodding towards the water.

"Who?" asked Ben, vaguely.

"Paul Derringer."

"Where?"

"Coming over the stepping-stones."

"I see him. Going to our place, of course," a savage gleam in his grey eyes.

"Of course. To flirt with Maysie, and amuse himself. Pass a few hours pleasantly."

"I'm hanged if he shall!" cried young Hartrey, "I'll spoil his pleasure by being present in *propria persona*!"

"That's right, Ben!" approved his companion, "don't let it be a *solitude à deux*. They are very dangerous. Go in and spoil sport."

"I mean to, and you must come also."

"With pleasure. It will give me great satisfaction to play marplot to Mr. Derringer," and together the young people set off following in the cavalry man's wake, while he, quite unsuspecting, hurried on, crossed the trim lawn, and disdaining such ordinary entrance as by the hall-door, went round, and sprang coolly through the open window of the parlour, where Maysie sat trifling with a piece of lace-work, which of late she had taken to working at when it was likely he would come, instead of the more homely occupation of darning socks.

She looked up with a little start and a lovely blush, as his tall figure darkened the window. The next moment he was holding both her hands in his, utterly regardless of the lace-work, which tumbled higgledy, piggledy to the ground, and looking down into her star-like eyes, with something in his own dark orbs that was new, and that she had never seen there before.

"Did you expect me?" he asked, in low, wooing tones—those tones that always stirred her heart so strangely.

"No, yes!—I hardly knew," she faltered.

"Then—you are glad I have come!"

"Oh, yes, very!" she assented, innocently and readily. "We can try those new duets you sent down," rising and going towards the old-fashioned piano.

"No, not yet!" he pleaded, putting a detaining hand on her arm. "We will try those later on. I want to speak to you now. Come and sit here," drawing her down beside him on the antique sofa, and throwing an arm carelessly along the back behind her, so that, though he did not actually touch her, a slight movement would draw her into his embrace.

"How silent you are!" he said, in a husky voice, after a pause, during which his eyes had hungrily gazed on the fair, young face, with its soft curves and dimples, and varying tell-tale colour.

"Am I?" she murmured, an uncommon and extraordinary feeling of shyness strong on her.

"Yes, very! I like to hear you talk. Do you know, Maysie—I may call you Maysie, now?" with an interrogative glance at her.

"Yes!" she assented, shyly, the rose-bloom on her cheeks deepening, while the long-fringed lids drooped lower over the glorious eyes, hiding their light.

"That I could listen to your voice hour

after hour—indeed, for ever!" he declared, passionately.

"For ever means a long, long time!" she managed to say steadily, though her heart beat fast, and stirred the knot of white roses at her breast with its tumultuous pulsings.

"I know it does, and that is why I say for ever. I should never tire of hearing those sweet tunes. Of being near you, Maysie, don't you believe me?" and his arm crept nearer the slender waist, and his head inclined towards hers, when suddenly a shadow fell athwart the sunshine streaming in at the window, and Ben Hartrey stood before him, looking rather white, and very stiff and stern.

"Good afternoon!" remarked the master of Stratton's Farm, in anything save pleasant tones.

"Oh, how d'ye do?" returned Paul, in no wise disconcerted by his sudden appearance, and deftly withdrawing his arm from its close proximity to Maysie's waist. "Lovely afternoon, isn't it? Been fishing?"

"No," growled Ben, savage beyond measure at the other's cool nonchalance.

"Only strolling about doing the *deux fois niente*," laughed the Irishman, audaciously, as he caught sight of Miss Roy's trim figure outside the window, and guessed she had been with him. "Very nice way of passing the time when you have a pleasant companion. Nothing so delightful as to lie on the velvet sward by the river's brink on a June day, looking up at the blue sky and listening to a soft, feminine voice."

"Unless it is lounging on a couch in an oak-panelled parlour, studying the sky through a window and doing most of the talking yourself," retorted Blanche, as she sprang lightly through the casement, and greeted her blushing, embarrassed friend.

"Fairly bit!" chuckled Derringer, who, like most of his countrymen, hugely appreciated wit and repartee. "You ought to be an Irishwoman, Miss Roy."

"Very glad I'm not."

"Why?" he demanded. "The daughters of the Emerald Isle are famed for their beauty."

"Good looks are not everything," she returned, looking somewhat pointedly at his handsome *blond* face.

"Are you one of those people who would rather be good than pretty?"

"I don't say that," she exclaimed, a little doubtfully, glancing at the reflection of her bonny, blooming face in the old oak-framed mirror that hung over the mantelshelf, and, despite that it was greenish and spotted, reflected it bravely and truly.

"No, I thought not," he said, sarcastically. "I don't think the woman exists who would not barter every virtue under the sun for a pretty face."

"You go rather too far when you make such a sweeping assertion," she answered coldly.

"I don't think that I do," firmly.

"No doubt your experience is vast and varied," she remarked, a little spitefully, for she felt angered against this man who was doing his best to rain her dearly loved brother's life and happiness.

"I must acknowledge that it is not a cramped one," he replied, with an air of mock modesty that was very exasperating. "I have been in most of the great cities of the world, and seen nearly every type of woman; and I can only say that they all set more store by their looks than they did by anything else, and thought more of a rosy mouth, a pair of bright eyes, a soft skin, a slim waist, &c., than they did of a sweet temper, a patient nature, or a clever brain."

"You must have come across only the vain ones of our sex," she declared.

"No. Many of those women who valued their personal appearance highly were utterly free from vanity or conceit; charming women, despite that they did their best always at any time of the day or night to look their best and fascinate any member of my sex who might happen to cross their path."

"Well, isn't it only natural that a woman should wish to look nice in the eyes of those she loves?" and instinctively her black orbs wandered to Ben's flushed, sullen face.

"Quite natural," he agreed, urbanely, a malicious twinkle in his eyes; "and that, no doubt, is why you donned to-day this lovely gown," touching with his forefinger the filmy laces decorating the white cambric she wore. "You know you look well in it, that it brings into strong relief the damask bloom in your cheeks and the dark luxuriance of your tresses, &c., &c."

"You are quite poetical, Mr. Derringer, over my very commonplace dress!"

"Commonplace or not, it suits you, and you know it!" he declared, stoutly.

"I never said that it didn't!" she retorted, coolly, hiding her annoyance skilfully under an assumption of indifference, for she saw that Ben had understood the gist of his impudent guest's remarks; "and now, Maysie, do give me a cup of tea, like a good child. I am absolutely dying of thirst, or is it too early?" with a glance at the dainty modern timepiece that ticked away briskly on the antique carved mantelshelf.

"Not a bit too early!" declared Maysie, eagerly rising at once, and giving the necessary orders to Betsy Raymond, who answered the sharp ping of the bell promptly, the little hostess being only too glad of anything that might create a diversion, and keep Ben's searching eyes off her flushed, tell-tale face.

"I never get such tea anywhere as you brew!" declared Blanche, holding out her cup for a second edition.

"No, Miss Hartrey's afternoon teas ought to be celebrated!" declared the irrepressible Derringer, as he helped himself to a good plateful of luscious, ruddy strawberries, and a plentiful supply of rich cream. "Don't often get such strawberries as these!" disposing of them rapidly. "Grown them, yourself, Hartrey?"

"Yes!"

Ben had confined himself to monosyllable and scrolls, but neither had the slightest effect on his Milesian guest, who was as cordial and lively as though he was being entertained by the most genial of hosts.

"What a *gourmand* the man is!" thought Blanche, as she watched him dispose of the ruddy berries with extraordinary celerity. "How can any woman be fascinated with him? He would certainly diognst me in a very short space of time."

"By the way, Maysie," she went on aloud. "Max asked me to deliver a message to you."

"Did he?" responded the young girl, flushing redly, for she was conscious that Derringer's eyes fastened on her face at mention of Roy's name, and her hand trembled to such an extent that she spilled the tea on to the tray instead of into Ben's cup, which she was replenishing.

"Yes."

"What is it about?"

"That fan he is having made for you to use at Lady Lethwiche's dance."

"Oh! What does he want to know?"

"Whether the sticks are to be tortoiseshell or ivory?"

"I hardly know!" she said, slowly, almost indifferently, for she felt strangely annoyed that the subject of a present from

Max should have been broached before Paul, though why she could not tell.

"Decide in favour of tortoiseshell," put in the officer, officiously. "Much prettier and lighter than ebony, and more fashionable too!"

"We don't go in for fashion much in these parts," observed Blanche, sarcastically.

"Don't you really!" he retorted, looking from pretty gown to Maysie, and back again with impudent inquiry in his bold eyes. "At any rate, your toilets would not be amiss on a *grande dame* in the Row, and I reckon, as our American cousins say, that there aren't two prettier dresses in the Park to-day!"

"You flatter us quite too much!" she replied, getting up and favouring him with a sweeping curtsy. "We are utterly overpowered."

"You don't look as though you were," he remarked, coolly.

"Well, Maysie, have you decided?" turning to her friend, and ignoring the plunger.

"Yes. I will have tortoiseshell mounts, please tell Max."

"Very well!" but across Miss Roy's brow swept an ominous frown, for she did not augur well for her brother, from this being led by another's taste. "I will tell him. Have you decided on your dress?"

"Yes. I am going to wear white."

"I hope you will let me send you your flowers for the occasion, white roses!" whispered Derringer, as he approached her, with an empty cup as an excuse.

"You are very kind!" she murmured, confusedly.

"And pray keep me at least six vases?" he urged, in the same low tone.

"I will keep you as many as I can," she agreed, hesitatingly; "but—but—"

"You have heaps of pleasant partners going, and so can afford to snub me and leave me out in the cold!" he sighed, giving her a passionate, bewildering glance.

"Oh, don't say that!" she implored, raising the lovely, shy eyes to his, and dropping them again at once as she met his impassioned gaze. "You shall have the six, I promise."

"Thanks, you are kind!" and he managed to press her fingers as he took the cup from her hand.

"We shall call for you at eight, punctually, Maysie!" broke in Miss Roy, warned to do so by Ben's black scowl, and an ominous clenching of his powerful hands that boded ill for the gallant plunger's beauty if they made acquaintance in a rough fashion with his face. "I hope you will be ready. You know Max likes punctuality."

"I shall be sure to be ready," returned Maysie. "I don't want to miss any of it. Dances are too rare here for that!"

"And besides, I hope for the first dance," ventured Paul, *sotto voce*.

"I am afraid I shall not be able to give you that, she said regretfully. "I have promised it to—Mr. Roy."

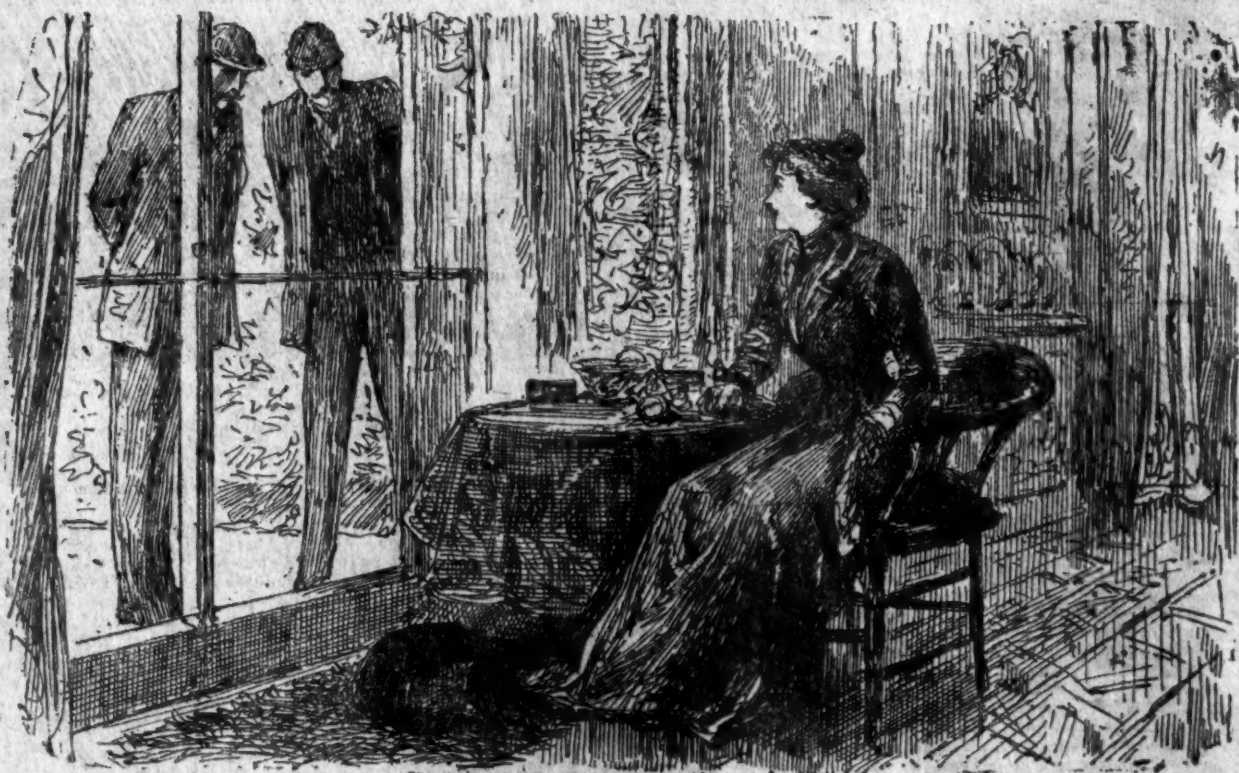
"Happy Mr. Roy!" with a sigh. "The second then may I claim?"

"Yes."

"How late it is!" exclaimed Blanche, jumping up as the timepiece chimed six. "I shall only just get home in time for dinner, and you dine before, so must be wishing to 'speed your parting guests,' though you don't say so!"

"I had no idea either it was so late," said Derringer, rising and making his adieu, being conveniently blind meanwhile to Ben's stiff manner and curt speech, as he escorted him to the hall door. "Of course you'll stay and dine with us, Blanche?" he asked, as he re-entered the room.

"If you'll see me home I will," she re-



"MISS MAYSIE, MAY WE COME IN?" SAID LORD GEORGE, BENDING DOWN TO LOOK IN AT THE WINDOW.

plied, giving him a look that would have satisfied the most exacting lover.

"Of course I will, and I'll give you a kiss now for getting rid of that fellow," suiting the action to the word. "How clever you were over it. I thought he would never go!"

"So did I. And aren't you glad he has gone? The atmosphere seems freer and purer!"

"Of course it does. He pollutes it with his falseness and conventionality. Come, Maysie," he added, stretching out his disengaged hand to her, "we will go for a stroll in the garden while Betsy lays the cloth!"

And together the three went out and strolled through the picturesque, untidy garden, and two were happy with that happiness which comes but once in a lifetime, the rapture of "love's young dream," and the other was silent and thoughtful, and full of unrest.

CHAPTER V.

THE night of Lady Lethwicke's dance arrived in due course, and vehicles from Shelton and all neighbouring parts were seen swiftly wending their way towards her charming house between the hours of eight and nine. The stream was long and continuous, for she was a popular hostess, a woman of *ton*, and, moreover, was young, pretty, and not too straightlaced in her ideas as to when and where a ballroom flirtation should end. She was conveniently blind when she came across a pair of young people billing and cooing in a semi-dusk corner of the spacious corridor that ran the whole length of her house—never noticed, or at least never commented on the number

of times any couple danced together, and had evidently arranged her beautiful conservatory, with its glossy-leaved palms, luxuriant blooms and dim fairy lights, with a view to furthering and promoting love affairs, and inducing offers of marriage to be made in its charmed and retired retreat.

Then everything was done in first-rate style. The champagne was really cham, not the juice of the gooseberry; the sherry of old vintage; the claret, Medoc, Comet, and other rare and costly brands; while brandy and sodas were to be had in unlimited quantities, and all sorts of harmless beverages for those who eschewed the fiery juice of the grape. Ices were plentiful, and the suppers always boasted a boar's head, a peacock, aspicks, chickens, plovers' eggs, and every dainty conceivable that was in season.

What wonder, then, that she seldom or never received a refusal from her numerous friends, and that her pretty gaily-lighted rooms were full to overflowing when Maysie entered them, leaning on Max Roy's arm, closely followed by Ben, who was escorting Blanche.

Very pretty she looked in her dress of billowy white tulle, looped here and there with yellow rosebuds, that did not, however, match the huge and costly bouquet of white roses she carried; but seeing that the one was sent her by Paul Derringer and the other by Max Roy, it was not greatly to be wondered at.

Max's heart had misgiven him just a little; but when he asked and was told who the donor of the magnificent bouquet was he soon reasoned himself out of his fears, for he told himself it was only natural a pretty girl like Maysie should attract attention, and be the recipient of such gifts from men,

especially as his intentions towards her, and her half promise to him, had not been made public.

Still, lover-like, he would have preferred to keep her all to himself, and not share even a glance or smile with anyone else. This was impossible, of course, and so he schooled himself to look on coolly while she was besieged by a cirele of men all demanding dances, and foremost among them Mr. Derringer, conspicuous by his height and handsome face. However, he had secured a round of half-a-dozen, and so could afford to look calmly on his military rival scoring up. Besides, he was not a jealous man in the ordinary sense of the word, and being honourable and upright himself would have believed nothing wrong in the conduct of the girl he loved unless he actually saw something very reprehensible with his own eyes.

Continued on page 618 of this number.

The Love that Dies Not

By A. J. C.

Is the title of a complete
ROMANTIC LOVE STORY
appearing next week;

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The next No. of this thrilling story will introduce Zitella in a new role; indeed each chapter will be found to be teeming with highly dramatic events and no part of the story can be missed by those who once commence to read it.



"IVY HAS A BEAUTIFUL VOICE," WHISPERED THE WIDOW TO PAUL BERESFORD; "IT IS EXACTLY LIKE HER MOTHER'S."

IVY'S PERIL.

SUMMARY OF PREVIOUS CHAPTERS.

The mother of Ivy Carew has met her death under very suspicious circumstances many years before the story begins, and Ivy, who is living with her guardian, Sir John Fortescue, at Starham, is dimly conscious that a mystery surrounds her life. Meadow View, in which Ivy was born, has recently been let to George White, and his sister, who take more than ordinary interest in their neighbours. The Rev. Mr. Ainslie recognises in the sister of Mr. White the woman who visited him, under peculiar conditions, many years before, just prior to Ivy's mother's death. Sir John Fortescue and the millionaire are fast friends, and it is evident that the Baronet does not see to what a pass matters are drifting. Meanwhile Paul Beresford has declared his love for Ivy and Lady Fortescue is anxious to see them married. The news of their engagement comes as a surprise to Mr. White and his sister, but they do not openly show their uneasiness. Sir John is prevailed upon by Mr. White to delay the marriage for six months, and to undertake a trip to Australia with his family.

CHAPTER V.

MR. BHERSFORD'S LOVE.

LADY FORTESCUE looked at the letter in utter bewilderment. A simple, kindly woman, with whom life had gone, save in one instance, very smoothly, and who had never known anything surprising or mysterious, excepting her sister's history, to her tranquil existence it came as a terrible shock that her husband should be suddenly implored to rush off to the Antipodes to visit a relation he had never heard of.

She was silent more from amazement than anything else. Until a few days before she had never even known that there were Fortescues beyond the sea! Sir John had bemoaned to her that a stranger must inherit Southlands at his death; and now here was this very stranger actually

writing to remind Sir John of his heirship, and asking a favour of him.

The letter was legibly written, and the grammar not specially faulty, but my lady did not admire the epistle. There was a sort of lack of refinement about it which grated on her, almost without knowing why. Perhaps she was annoyed at her husband's interest in it; perhaps she felt for the first time how bitterly he regretted his childless state! A kind of faint jealousy seized her heart; hitherto she and Ivy had been the whole world to him; now a stranger's words had power to cause him emotion.

Lady Fortescue was not an ungenerous woman, but decidedly she wished that letter from the Antipodes had never come.

"Horton Ranch, Nr. Sydney,

"New South Wales,

"4 Sept., 189—.

"DEAR SIR JOHN FORTESCUE,—

"You may not remember hearing much of the great uncle who emigrated to Australia more than seventy years ago. You were not born then, and as our branch of the family never cared much about letter-writing, the fact of your having relations at the Antipodes may be news to you. But hearing from a friend just come out that you were the head of the house, and had neither chick nor child, I think it's time I reminded you blood is thicker than water, and that the Fortescue estates being strictly entailed, it's over here you'll have to look for your heir. I'm well on seventy myself. I was born out here, and I don't want any changes, but still I'm your uncle Alexander's son, and after you I take it the representative of the Fortescues. I don't belong to your generation but to your father's,

who was my first cousin. I married young, and have nine children, and most of them are heads of families. Seeing you've no heir of your own, it stands to reason my son John will be a baronet some day, and I think it would only be kind and cousinly if you recognised his claims on your liberality, for he has a large family and small means. If you like to bring your wife out here we'd make you kindly welcome, or John and his children might pay you a visit in the old country. I don't want to foist myself on anyone, only this matter will have to be cleared up some day, and it seems to me it would save the lawyer's a lot of bother after your death if, while you lived, you acknowledged us as your next-of-kin, which we can prove ourselves to be. It was seeing your name on the prospectus of the Delonda Gold Mines Company first made me institute inquiries."

A good deal more followed. Sir John watched his wife's face closely.

"Well?"

"I don't like it, Jack."

"Why not?"

"It is mercenary, and you had only been connected with the gold mines a few days when this letter was written."

"No doubt they cabled out the list of directors."

"What do you mean to do?"

Sir John looked out. It was a bitterly cold morning, and the snow was falling fast in heavy flakes. I shall always think myself the severity of the weather had a great influence over the Baronet's mind.

"I think we had better go."

Lady Fortescue threw up her hands.

"Go to Sydney—to the utmost ends of the earth—just to humour the whim of a

far-off cousin, whom you never even heard of before this morning? John, I think you are beside yourself!"

Ivy had left the room almost unperceived. There was no one to disturb the conjugal *tête à tête* which was more like a quarrel than anything that had ever happened in Sir John's wedded life.

"My dear," he said, a little testily, "you don't seem to understand that when a man has property it brings its own duties."

My lady tossed her head.

"I know this, that Southlands has been as carefully kept up and looked after as though a son of our own were to succeed to it. Why can't this Australian be content to wait till—till we are gone. He has no right over an acre of the estate till then."

Sir John sighed.

"I never thought you would have taken things in this light, Lucy."

Lucy was obdurate.

"I do believe you're glad. I really think you are pleased at receiving that letter."

"I am most thankful."

"John!"

He put one hand half-caressingly on her head.

"Lucy, I have longed to know who was to come after me here. Since I learned that, with all my love for Ivy, Southlands could never be hers, I have positively yearned to know the man who must some day be master here. I had thought of proposing to you that when Ivy was Mrs. Beresford we should wander through Australia together, and try to trace out my Uncle Alexander's descendants. This letter seems almost an answer to my prayer."

Lady Fortescue was crying bitterly.

"You are very cruel, John."

"Cruel!"

"You make me wish that I was dead, that I had died long ago. If only you were free to take another wife you might have sons of your own, and no need to go to Australia in search of an heir."

Sir John stooped and kissed her.

"How long have we been married, Lucy?"

"More than twenty years."

"And have I ever given you cause to think I regretted our marriage?"

"Never; but—"

"My dear, I did not think there was any need to tell you how I loved you! Lucy don't you know I would rather have you for my wife childless than lose you for the sake of a dozen sons?"

She blushed. She was young still, and his words made her happy.

"I was ungenerous, Jack."

"Only fanciful. Now, Lucy, listen to me. I can and will do nothing against your wishes; but since it seems certain the eldest son of my correspondent must one day reign as master of Southlands don't you think it would be better for us to find him out, and see what he is like?"

"He will be horrible?"

Sir John sighed.

"The letter has prejudiced you! I own it is not a very admirable production; but remember, there is always a difficulty in writing to anyone you have never seen."

"But you would never have written such a letter, John."

"But I was educated at Rugby, and later on at Oxford. Things have advanced very much in the colonies lately; but sixty years ago, when my cousin Alexander went to school, I don't expect education was very flourishing."

"What do you want to do, John?"

"Nothing against your wishes."

"But tell me."

"I should like to go to Sydney by the

next steamer; spend, perhaps, a month there, and then return home. Say we started in the first week in December, we might arrange to be home by the beginning of May; that would give you plenty of time to choose Ivy's trousseau."

Lady Fortescue hesitated, every feeling of her own rose against the scheme; but she loved her husband dearly, and for fifteen years he had given a loving home to her orphan niece; was it not the height of selfishness to refuse the first opportunity of doing anything for his relations?

"You really wish it, John?"

"I should wish it of all things; we are both excellent sailors (they had once crossed to the Isle of Wight when the sea was as smooth as glass, this was the achievement on which he founded his statement); the voyage would be nothing but a pleasure trip to us."

"Ye-es," said his wife a little doubtfully, "but you hate travelling."

"Not if I can make myself understood in English. You see, Lucy, there would be no French idioms or German verbs, no foreign cooking (he was quoting Mr. White's statement word for word, and yet believed honestly he himself had discovered all the advantages of the voyage); we should escape the rigour of the winter. Then I could look after the Delondra mines, and set my affairs in perfect order by proving who is next-of-kin, and arranging for his succession."

Lady Fortescue winced.

"You are quite well, John?"

"Perfectly—but I am nearly sixty, Lucy; and to put one's house in order brings death no nearer, my love."

"Then I suppose we had better go."

"You really consent?"

"I cannot be an obstacle; but I am afraid it will be a terrible disappointment to Ivy. She had so counted on a winter in London, and frequent meetings with Paul Beresford."

Sir John looked puzzled.

"It is hardly fair to her or the young man either. I insisted on a six months' engagement that they might have frequent opportunities of meeting; but if Ivy is at the antipodes for five months out of the six, why really they might as well have been married at once."

"Don't say anything to Ivy yet," pleaded Lady Fortescue. "I don't want her to be pained unless it is absolutely necessary, and I have a little scheme in my head about her."

"Not for her being married before," he said; "I can't consent to that, Lucy. Why, I should look just like a weathervane if I changed my mind so soon!"

"Oh, no! But I don't see why Ivy should not remain behind."

"Without a chaperone, Lucy! You are getting reckless!"

"Not at all. Mrs. Austin would be delighted to have Ivy with her. They are going up to London next week. She was deploring to me only last week how lonely she should feel in the great house near Cavendish-square. I feel sure to leave Ivy in her charge would be a real pleasure to her."

Sir John whistled.

"White is a splendid man of business, and I have a sincere regard for him; but, after all, they are not exactly in our sphere. Do you think we could leave Ivy with them for four or five months?"

"I should never suggest it but for her engagement. The one drawback is, she will not meet many fashionable people, but just now I doubt if she cares for society at all; they would welcome Paul gladly, and I think she would be far happier in Coningsby-street than roaming the ocean with us."

"It would be putting us under a great obligation to White and his sister," objected Sir John.

"But you are putting them under a great obligation, I consider, by going to Australia in Mr. White's stead."

"True. Well, Lucy, you have astonished me. I never thought you would propose parting from Ivy."

"I shall miss her sadly," and the quivering lip told the truth of her words; "but I think it best for her."

"You used to be afraid to let her out of your sight for an hour."

"I have felt much easier now I know that she is dead. No one else in the whole world has any motive for harming Ivy. If we leave her with Mrs. Austin Paul will be able to see her continually, and I never was anxious about her health, for I can't remember her ailing anything in her life."

"Well, Lucy, you had better go and sound Mrs. Austin on the subject. Then you can tell Ivy, and I'll run up by the night mail, and see about our passage."

Mrs. Austin's reply was all that could be wished; but with Ivy there was more difficulty.

"Can't I stay here, aunt?" she said slowly, when Lady Fortescue had unfolded her brilliant scheme. "Of course I understand you and Uncle Jack must go to Australia. It is the only thing you can do. I shall miss you terribly, but I wouldn't stop you for the world; only please don't let me spend the time of your absence with Mrs. Austin."

"My dear Ivy, I thought it such a splendid idea. I have been over to her, and she is delighted with it."

Ivy's face fell.

"If you have settled it with her, of course there is nothing to be done; but, oh, aunt, I would far rather have stayed here."

"My dear child, you couldn't have stayed at Southlands by yourself? It would not have been the thing."

"Or I could have gone to the Vicarage. Mr. Ainslie would have been delighted."

Poor Lady Fortescue, she often found Ivy's absolute innocence of the social laws that most girls pick up by intuition, very trying. She did not tell her niece in so many words that the Vicar being not much over fifty, and unmarried, was not a proper custodian for her. She only spoke of Mrs. Austin's pleasure at the proposed plan.

"And you know you will see Paul constantly. Mrs. Austin means to give him a general invitation. They are going up to town next week; then they will come down to Meadow View for Christmas."

"And when shall you be home?"

"April or May. I don't half like the idea of the trip, Ivy; but your uncle's heart seems set on it."

"Then I know you will like it," said Ivy gently. "Aunt Lucy, I often think you and Uncle Jack are the happiest couple in all the world. It seems so hard," she broke off abruptly.

"What seems hard, my darling?"

"I was thinking of my mother. She and papa were parted so very soon after their marriage."

"Yes. Nell was a widow a little more than a year. Heaven send you a longer life, my Ivy."

"Isn't it strange, Aunt Lucy. Papa died when I was a few months old; and yet, until quite lately, I always fancied I could remember him, and I used to think I hated him."

"Your father was one of the noblest men I ever met," said Lady Fortescue, hastily, "and you would have loved him dearly. Always remember, dear, you have a right

to be proud of him. Charles Carew was a man in a thousand. It was an evil day for all his friends when he went to Rome."

"He took malaria there, and died?"

"He died very soon after he got there," said Aunt Lucy, evasively.

"And then grief broke mamma's heart. Do you know, aunt, I can't recollect her plainly, only I seem to know she was very beautiful, and very, very unhappy."

"Never speak of her, dear!"

"But why not?" asked Ivy frankly. "Why does no one speak of my mother, Aunt Lucy? Plenty of other people are dead, but yet their names are not shunned, as hers is. Only think, I am nearly twenty, and yet I know nothing of my own mother!"

"You are very like her, dear," said Lady Fortescue simply. "She was beautiful and unhappy, and she died young. This is my sister's history, Ivy, and to me her loss is even now so full of pain that I cannot bring myself to speak of her often."

"I wonder I was not called after her! Ivy is very pretty, but I should have liked one of my mother's names."

"You have both," said her Aunt, simply. "In point of law you are Helen Dorothea Carew, but neither your uncle nor I could bear the sound of either name, and your own father had called you Ivy from some pretty fancy of his own, so we kept it up."

"Then I am not really Ivy at all? How surprised Paul will be. May I tell him?"

Lady Fortescue laughed.

"He will have to know. My dear, don't you recollect you are a great heiress? There will be wedding settlements and deeds. In all, of course, you must be described by your true names. Only to me you will never be anything but Ivy."

It was wonderful how quickly those few days passed, or what a very simple thing a voyage to the Antipodes became where money was no object. Lady Fortescue took fur and winter wraps for the first part of the journey, and for the latter calmly ordered an "outfit for Australia." It costs a considerable sum, but was sent on board direct from the shop, and so spared her considerable trouble; in fact, the maid merely packed a couple of the lined trunks, putting into them much the same things her ladyship would have required for a lengthened visit.

All too soon the last evening came. Sir John and Lady Fortescue would travel by the early mail to Plymouth, so that farewells must be said the night before, when there was a quiet, little dinner at their hotel, with only Ivy and her lover besides the two travellers. The quartet must break up early, partly in regard for the coming fatigues of Sir John and his wife, partly because Paul was to escort Ivy to Coningsby-street, where she was to take up her residence with the millionaire and his sister.

"I hate 'last' things!" said Ivy, her bright eyes not quite dry; "there is something so sad about them. Now, I know perfectly well this voyage is just a pleasure trip, and that you and uncle Jack will enjoy it immensely; and I know you wouldn't go if you didn't think it right, and yet—"

Paul who was next her, squeezed her hand.

"Six months will soon pass, Ivy."

"But a great deal may happen in them," observed Sir John. "Why, six months ago we never dreamed of sitting here with you, young man. We had never heard of you or the Whites, and that perfidious child always declared she meant to live and die an old maid, that she might devote herself to us and our infirmities."

This really had the desired effect. Everyone laughed.

"I don't see much sign of the infirmities, Sir John," said Paul, lightly.

"Well!" said Ivy, emphatically; "I am quite prepared for you to bring back the heir, and all his children; but please don't trouble yourself about the other descendants of cousin Alexander. He expressly states he has nine children (rather ancient 'children' I should fancy), all of whom are heads of families. If you import the patriarch and all his descendants, Uncle John, you will have to enlarge Southlands."

"I assure you there is no danger," returned Sir John. "I own I am anxious to see the eldest son. I hope he is a fine lad!"

Ivy laughed.

"Lad! Why his father is nearly seventy, and I believe people marry early in the colonies. Your heir will be about five years your junior, Uncle John, that's all."

"Well, Miss Carew, you have selected your future partner, so even if my 'heir' turned out an Adonis it would be too late for you to benefit."

"I hate Australians. Oh, Paul, forgive me?" for her lover's cheek had flushed. "But surely you can't call yourself one just because your grandfather made his money out there?"

"Paul is English to the backbone," said Sir John, approvingly. "I suppose, my dear fellow, I can't do anything for you out yonder? If, as Ivy says, your grandfather came from Australia you may have relations there you'd like looked up?"

The utter ignorance of geography Sir John manifested would have amused a traveller. Ever since his voyage was determined he had made offers of hunting up friends for everyone he came across. It did not in the least concern him whether the friends had been last heard of in Sydney, Victoria, or Brisbane. As a matter of fact, I believe he thought these important centres all joined each other, or at most were separated by a short suburban line of railway.

Paul smiled. He possessed more practical ideas on this point than Sir John.

"I never heard my grandfather left any relations in Sydney, sir, but I know he lived there until his marriage. If you meet any Beresford's I daresay they would be connections. The name is not a very common one."

Sir John produced an enormous pocket-book, and made a note of this; then he assured Paul he left Ivy in his trust, conjointly with Mrs. Austin and her brother.

"They are sure to be good to her," he said, simply. "My little girl has not an enemy in the world; but you'll look after her, Beresford?"

"I will, indeed."

"If I had known I should be rushing off to the Antipodes I believe I'd have let you marry her out of hand; but it's too late to change now, and six months will soon pass."

"And I can see her often."

Ivy and Lady Fortescue had gone upstairs for a few "last words;" the two men were alone. A strange regret seemed to have attacked Sir John.

"You know, Beresford, I never mistrusted you—never once; but the child was young, and it seemed to me best to wait. White advised it, too. He said what were six months when you would have your whole life to spend together?"

"My dear sir," said Paul, warmly, "I have never thought your treatment of me anything but generous. You seemed to understand my love for Ivy from the first."

"But I couldn't let you marry her out of hand. People might have talked; they would have said I was afraid of your hearing the scandal about her mother."

"I have heard it," said Paul, taking the Baronet's hand. "I know that cruel tongues dare to assert that Mrs. Carew, knew something of her husband's death, but I feel it was impossible. She was Ivy's mother; she could not have been so busy."

"I'm glad you know it," said Sir John. "Before you married her I hope I should have told you, but it pains my wife and me to mention that old rumour. You see it is just the one shadow on our family history, and it was brought by one we loved."

"But you never believed it—you could not."

"I have never let myself think of it. She died and left us Ivy. I think that legacy would have made us forgive her much."

"I know you have been the tenderest parents to Ivy."

"We have done our best; when we thought there was danger we guarded her zealously."

"Danger from whom?"

Sir John hesitated.

"On her deathbed that poor ill-fated girl wrote my wife a letter. In it she named the man who destroyed her husband. While he lived she thought there was no human safety for her child, since Ivy's death would make him rich. For years, Beresford, we lived, in dread of this scoundrel. It is only quite recently we have known he died while Ivy was still a child."

"It must have been a relief."

"It was like a millstone taken from round our neck. Not only was there the fear for Ivy's safety, he might have met her anywhere, and told her the miserable story we are so anxious to conceal."

"And you are sure he is dead?"

"I know someone who was at the funeral. Yes, my boy, last year there seemed heavy clouds about our child's future, but all is fair weather now."

But though the voyage might be called one of choice—though, humanely speaking, it was certain they would all meet again—the parting was very painful. Ivy cried almost as though her heart was broken, and Lady Fortescue was no less agitated. At last Paul took his darling's arm, and half led, half carried her to the millionaire's brougham, which was in waiting.

"They will come back," he told her cheerfully, as they drove along; "in a very few months you will see them again."

"I know; it is very foolish of me to grieve, but I cannot help it."

"It is not at all foolish, sweetheart. You have never been parted from your aunt before. It is only natural you should feel the separation."

"If only I were going home."

"What, to St. Arran's? Why, Ivy I could never see you then!"

She shivered.

"I know! but it would be home."

"Mrs. Austin will be kind to you. I don't like her," said Paul frankly; "but she really seems fond of you. I am sure she will try and make you happy."

"And you will come often, Paul?"

"I have been told to consider Coningsby-street as my home, and I assure you I mean to obey the instructions literally."

"Paul."

"Why sweetheart, you are trembling?"

"I feel so frightened."

"Of what, my own?"

"I don't know."

He was silent, only he held her to him a little more closely.

"Don't despise me," she whispered. "I can't help it. I can't even put the feeling into words; only I seem to know that trouble is coming."

"You are tired and overwrought."

"It is not that. I have had the same feeling on me for days."

"Did you tell your aunt?"

"I tried to; but she only laughed and said it was only a morbid presentiment."

"Presentiments are often groundless," said Paul cheerfully. "Ivy, you must promise me to try and think no more of yours, or I shall have you ill."

"I have never been ill in my life!"

"Then don't begin now. You know your uncle has deputed all his authority to me, and I mean to keep you in excellent order, young lady."

She smiled and blushed. Another moment and they were in Coningsby-street, warmly welcomed by the millionaire and his sister.

Paul Beresford had never heartily liked either of this pair; but exacting as he was prepared to be for Ivy's comfort, he could not but own their reception of her was perfect. There was hospitality and welcome, without fussiness or profuse demonstrations, and were evidently delighted to have her. Both Mrs. Austin and her brother showed they remembered she must sorrow over her aunt's absence, and that they were not even old friends to have the privilege of soothing her grief.

"Nothing could be kinder," thought Paul, as he took leave after Ivy had retired to her room. "I was half afraid they would overdo it, and not let the poor child have a minute to herself; but I see Mrs. Austin has plenty of tact. She will give Ivy rest and quiet until she has got over the shock of our parting. After all, what good people White and his sister are! I used to have very hard thoughts of them, but really they have behaved with the utmost consideration both for me and Ivy. I mustn't look down on people again just because they don't understand sentiment."

The good ship *Arethusa* sailed the next day, and when Paul and his pretty fiancée next met they were able to compare notes on the loving lines of farewell that had come from Plymouth.

"Courage," said Mrs. Austin kindly, when they sat down to dinner, and Ivy's cheeks were still paler than their wont. "Ah, my dear! if you had travelled as much as I have you wouldn't think so much of a trip to Australia. But then George and I are born wanderers, and go to Paris or Hamburg as coolly as other people drive from Charing Cross to Regent Street."

Paul smiled.

"I suppose Mr. White has not taken either of those trifling trips you allude to now; I see you do not expect him to dinner?" He asked the question as the veriest jest, but the reply surprised him.

"George has gone to Spain."

"To Spain!" echoed Ivy. "Why, he was here at lunch, and he said not a word!"

"He did not know it then; he sent round at five for a portmanteau, with a message he might have to go away on business. Just before the dinner bell rang I had the telegram saying he was off to Spain."

"And you don't seem to mind," said Ivy. "Why, I should be startled almost out of my senses!"

Mrs. Austin laughed.

"I am a woman of the world, Ivy, and you are a child. Don't look so troubled, dear; such experiences as mine don't come to anyone. George is a financier, and as such liable to be called off to the world's end at a moment's notice. When you are Mrs. Beresford your husband won't be in business, so you won't have such sudden alarms."

Ivy blushed at the allusion to the time when she should be "Mrs. Beresford." Paul felt ashamed of himself, but for a moment he did wonder whether Mrs. Austin

had been taken as much by surprise at her brother's expedition as she gave them to understand.

It was a very pleasant evening. Ivy and her lover often looked back to it afterwards in the dark night of trouble which so soon broke over their heads. Often the girl marvelled that they could have been so serenely tranquil with danger hovering so near; but on this bright winter's night not a suspicion of trouble came to her; she had dismissed her "presentiment" at Paul's bidding. She found Mrs. Austin the kindest and most considerate of hostesses, and she had already begun to think that, with Paul's constant visits and those pretty needlework preparations for the wedding which she already planned, time would really pass neither slowly nor unhappily till the early spring brought back Sir John and Lady Fortescue.

Mrs. Austin gave the lovers a long *table-d'hôte* in the drawing-room; in fact she only joined them when the rattle of silver and china told her that the footman had already disturbed their bliss. Then she talked pleasantly and naturally of the days when they should be living at Carew, and made Ivy sing one or two old-fashioned English ballads.

"She has a beautiful voice," whispered the widow to Paul Beresford; "it is exactly like her mother's."

Paul bowed; there was nothing in the remark he could resent, but he would rather not have heard of Ivy's resemblance to her mother on that particular evening.

"Remember," says Mrs. Austin when she bade him good-night, "you are to give us all your leisure evenings. I have always heard your duties at the 'Security' were very light. Prove it by letting us see a great deal of you. You know in my brother's absence we have a double claim on you; I can't keep Ivy shut up like a state prisoner, and two lone, unprotected ladies can't venture out of an evening alone."

Paul thanked her warmly, and departed, little-thinking of all that was to happen before he sprang up those steps again, and never even dreaming of the misery he was to endure before he presses Ivy's slender form once again to his heart.

(To be continued next week.)

(This story commenced in No. 1974. Back Nos. can be obtained through any Newsagent.)

COME AND SLEEP.

Come ye unto the purple shadows,
Come and rest now the sun is low;
Far away o'er the Western Meadows,
See ye not the crimson glow?
The way is long, the way is dreary,
And well we know the hills are steep,
But hither come when the heart is weary;
Come and sleep.

The morn like a dream, hath passed before ye,
The moon and twilight come and gone,
And now night's shade is bending o'er ye,
Yet after night will come the dawn.
O, well we know the path is dreary,
And well we know the fords are deep,
But come when the heart is weary;
Come and sleep.

Fear ye not the purple shadows,
Nor to dwell within their night;
What we've sought amid the meadows
Here ye'll find—from care respite,
And though the path be long and dreary,
'Tis the way all travellers creep,
Come and rest when the heart is weary;
Come and sleep.

TWICE CHOSEN.

CHAPTER XXIII.

LADY LYNESTONE GOES INTO SOCIETY.

LADY LYNESTONE'S days of mourning were things of the past. She still thought kindly, and with regret, of the good old man who had taken her from a life of poverty and drudgery—thought of him as one at peace, whom it would be wrong to wish back in this world of cares and troubles, which needs must come to the best as well as to the worst of men; to the richest, as well as the poorest.

She had been a model young widow, but now her friends urged her to come more freely into society, and to take up that place in the world to which she had the right; if not for her own sake, for that of her boy, for whose benefit she should make acquaintances among influential people of her own class.

Had anyone told the little Countess that she was getting weary of retirement and solitude she would have denied it indignantly; but, nevertheless, when she had decided to come out of her chrysalis state, she was as eager and excited over it all as any young girl looking forward to her first ball.

Rosamond, Countess of Lynestone, did not lack a single advantage in her introduction to the great world. She was taken up by the very best people. The Duchess of St. Ives, whose blood was of the bluest, and whose character was *sans reproche*, presented her at Court, and offered her a place under her aristocratic wing, introducing her to all those whom she deemed worth knowing.

Her own rank gave her status, and her youth and beauty made her a star of the London season; while her money was an additional attraction to men "about to marry," or to those who contemplated matrimony as a destination, of necessity to be arrived at some day, looking at it, as they did, from their various standpoints. To some it was a useful evil. To others an inevitable fate, which overtakes men sooner or later, so that they think they may as well be on the look-out, to accept it under circumstances as favourable as possible—to a few, as the crowning point of earthly happiness, but to only a very few.

The Countess of Lynestone, with her handsome town house, stylish carriages, and liveried servants; the beautiful Countess in the dainty and elegant dresses, which Worth turned out for her, regardless of expense, had plenty of admirers, both eligible and ineligible.

An Italian nobleman followed her about like her own shadow, until he became a positive annoyance to her.

It was at a ball at the Duchess of St. Ives that she had first met him, and she was often rallied by her friend as to his evident adoration.

But Rosamond had taken a strange dislike to the man, with his compliments, his sweet soft-nothings, and the perpetual worship of his dark eyes.

It might have pleased a school-girl, but not Lady Lynestone, who had experienced the stern realities of life as well as its frivolities.

"You have made an undoubted impression, my dear!" laughed the Duchess.

"I cannot say the same for the gentleman, unless it be a bad one, dear Duchess; and now I want you to tell me who the creature really is."

Her Grace shrugged her shoulders. "Ciel! my child, how should I tell you? The Marchese di Riviera is a Roman of Romans, according to his own account. His

title is a known one; for the rest, he is received everywhere, and that is all which we require to know."

"I don't like him."

"*Tant pis pour lui.*"

"I wish he would not follow me about."

"No doubt he is of a persevering nature."

"Then it is a pity he does not employ it better."

"He is a good-looking fellow, Rosamond. Why do you so dislike him?"

"I cannot say. My instincts are against him."

"Very odd! I wonder how you will like our new guest?"

"Who is that?"

"Lord Carruthers; you don't know him, do you?" as she looked up at his name.

"No; but he was at Mentone when we were, and some friends of mine have often spoken of him."

"Favourably?"

"Oh, yes! they liked him very much!"

"I am glad of that; he is a favourite of mine, and will be a good match, if any of the London girls can catch him; but the bird has the credit of being somewhat shy in coming forward."

"All the better; there are too many male coquettes by half."

"Not more than female, my dear! I never allow abuse of either sex; one is as good and as bad as the other."

"Very likely, Duchess; but there is nothing good in the Marchese."

"You are hard-hearted, Rosamond; I think the man is harmless."

"Do you? I don't!"

"That is unfortunate, as you will both be guests in our house. Had I really thought you disliked him so much I would not have invited him."

"Oh! he cannot hurt me," answered Rosamond, and a dark man within the door of the conservatory, who had been hidden from the ladies by the thick, green foliage, now stepped into the room, and stood with eyes fixed upon Lady Lyneston, with a strange expression in them, which was almost mockery.

She rose at once.

"Duchess, it is time to dress," she said, quietly. "Will you excuse me?"

"No, Rosamond, I will not excuse you," laughed the lady; "for I'll follow you! Marchese, you know your way about?" and she gave her hand a comprehensive wave to indicate that the whole establishment was at his service, upon which the man bowed low as a Roman nobleman would, and should do.

"How can you be so civil to him?" asked the Countess, as soon as the door was closed behind them.

"One must be all that to one's guests, Rosie. You're not amiable this afternoon, or you would recognize the fact at once; and, moreover, I'm sure the man heard our remarks. Did you see him look at you? My dear, you had better not make an enemy of him; these hot-blooded foreigners are sometimes rather dangerous people to offend."

"I'd sooner have him for an enemy than a friend!"

"I don't know, Rosie. Put on that exquisite silver-grey dress, with its vapour-like tulle trimmings; it looks like cloudlets upon a soft, calm sky, with the gloaming coming on, and the diamonds which you wear to clasp it, seem like first pale stars peeping out. You will never look so sweet as you do in your half-mourning shades; no one ever does!"

"Your simile is quite poetic, Duchess, but I believe Worth knows how to blend all colours."

They stood laughing at the door of Lady

Lyneston's bedroom, and then she went in and found her maid waiting for her, and the Duchess of St. Ives passed on.

The Marchese looked after the ladies, and an evil expression crossed his face.

"It matters little, *mia cara ucellina*,

whether you like me or no," he muttered.

"Money I must have, and with the story I shall tell you, you will do as I wish, for the sake of your blue-eyed boy. I have no fears, oh! dear no. You would not risk seeing him turned from Lyneston as an imposter," and the evil look deepened, as he smiled.

He was no longer a very young man. Forty-five summers and winters had probably passed over his head, but they had not whitened a hair; still there were lines about his face when in repose, which proclaimed him all his age.

He was already in evening dress, and, finding himself alone, he lounged luxuriously in an easy chair, making himself very much at home.

A large party assembled at dinner, and Lady Lyneston found herself paired off with the guest, Lord Carruthers. He recognized her again at once, for her beauty had made a great impression upon him when he had seen her at the florist's in Mentone.

As for her, she had a vague idea that she had met him somewhere before, although she had not been introduced to him.

They were evidently mutually pleased with one another, and chatted with ease together, while the Marchese watched them with lowering brow.

"I must strike soon," he muttered, as he tossed off his champagne freely.

"I think I know some friends of yours, Lord Carruthers," said the Countess, with a smile.

"Indeed!" responded the Earl.

"Yes! Sir Richard Freemantle and his daughter were very kind to me in my early widowhood, and Miss Thorndyke—"

A slight shadow fell across his face at the name of the girl he had loved so long and so well, and Lady Lyneston noticed it.

"Do you not like them?" she asked, innocently.

"Like them? yes, most sincerely. I am glad they are your friends."

"I was wondering if by any possibility I could have seen you with them, Lord Carruthers! Somehow your face seems familiar to me, and yet—"

"Yes, we met once," he returned, in a low voice. "It was at Mentone, and you were purchasing flowers. I have never forgotten you, Lady Lyneston; you were looking so sad."

"I was in trouble," she returned, as she drooped her eyes, "but, strange to say, I remember you."

"Do you?" he asked eagerly. "I am so glad of that," and there was a short silence between them.

"Have you heard of Miss Thorndyke's trouble?" she said at length.

"No! I have only just returned from a trip to Australia. I have been wandering about the face of the earth of late."

"And I have often longed to do so," she replied; "but we women have so little latitude allowed us. I should not have cared to go followed by a troop of servants. I wanted to be alone."

"I understand; that feeling will come to us sometimes. But about Miss Thorndyke?"

"She has lost her father, poor girl!"

"It will be a sad blow to her," he returned, gravely, "and I am sorry for Mrs. Thorndyke's sake also. They were a very united family. Poor fellow! So he is gone! I certainly did not expect to hear that."

"Nor anyone else till quite lately. He had been ailing a long time, but no one thought anything very serious was the matter with him. What a favourite he was! The worst of it is that they are left badly off, and of course they will have to leave the Rectory. I mean to ask them down to Lyneston to stay as long as they like. I do not know the mother, but I intend to be fond of her for Adela's sake."

He gave her a grateful glance.

"You like her?" she said, interrogatively.

"Yes! we are real friends."

"So are she and I!"

"Our mutual liking for her will be a bond of union between us," he said, softly. "Shall it be?"

She lifted her face to his, and their eyes met.

"I think we shall be friends, too, some day," she answered, gently.

"At no very distant one, I hope," he replied, in an eager tone.

Then, looking up, he met the sinister glance of the Italian fixed upon them.

"Who is that dark fellow?" he enquired.

"My *bête noire*," she laughed. "Do you know I have an idea that that man will yet give me trouble or annoyance!"

"Indeed I hope not, Lady Lyneston; but if ever that day should arrive, remember that you have a friend in Reginald Carruthers!"

"I will not forget," she answered gratefully. "You see I have no old friends. My husband and I lived so quiet a life, and my only relation now is Lord Lyneston's nephew, my boy's guardian. I suppose you do not chance to know Major Egerton—"

"I beg his pardon, I heard of his promotion to-day. He is now the colonel of his regiment, and appointed to the second battalion, at present stationed at Malta: so I hope we shall see more of him than it has been possible for us to do, for he has been in India. He came to us at Mentone, at Lord Lyneston's request, when he was so ill. I don't know what I should have done without him. He saw me through all my troubles before he went back!"

"He was a brother officer and especial chum of poor Thorndyke's. I have never seen him, but I have heard him spoken of often at the Rectory, and always with affection."

"Yes, I am sure he is a good fellow," continued the Countess, warmly. "You know he was my husband's heir for so many years, and every one thought him a confirmed old bachelor. It must have been a bitter disappointment to Colonel Egerton, when Lord Lyneston married me, but he showed me no ill-feeling or resentment, as some men would have done."

"They would not have deserved the name of men!" replied the Earl.

"I don't know. I have always felt very sorry for the Colonel."

"He is happy in having your sympathy," returned Lord Carruthers, kindly.

"Are you going to Lady Molyneux's ball to-night?" she asked suddenly.

"I suppose so. I am at the Duchess of St. Ives' service to go where she directs."

"How very obliging!" laughed Rosamond. "You have no will of your own, then."

"I don't know. Are you going?"

"Yes! decidedly."

"Then I have a will; I'm going too?"

The Countess caught the glance of her hostess's eye, and the ladies thereupon retired to the drawing-room.

"My dear," said the Duchess, kindly, "I am glad to see you getting on so swimmingly with Lord Carruthers. He is quite one of the right sort—no affectation, no nonsense. He is neither a fop nor a fool, nor a

woman-hater nor a masher. If my daughter were seventeen instead of seven I should often invite him to meet her."

"That is very complimentary to his lordship," laughed Rosamond; "but I am sure you are right. There is something very honest and genuine about him!"

"That is open! Well, how many dances are you engaged to him for this evening?"

"None at present."

"Oh! He does not make hay while the sun shines."

"We did not mention the ball till the last minute."

"I see; well, I will take care that he is in your carriage, and escorts you."

"Thanks! any one but the Marchese."

"My dear, I don't think that renowned foreigner appreciated your easy chat with Carruthers," laughed the Duchess; "I saw strange sparks flash from his dark eyes."

"I do not see that it can matter to him to whom I talk. He ought to know by now that anyone's company is preferable to me than his."

The Duchess shrugged her ivory shoulders.

"There is no accounting for men. Some require no encouragement in fact, the more they are repulsed the more determined they are in their suit. The Marchese means to have you, Rosamond."

The little Countess gave her such a startled look, that her friend laughed heartily.

"These are not the days of masked ruffians and abductions, Rosie. Don't be scared. The Marchese dare not run off with you against your will, but he will try and bend your will to his."

"How?"

"How can I tell? I wish I had never invited him here; but on this particular occasion it was St. Ives' fault, not mine. He asked him, or let him ask himself; from what I can make out that is nearer the mark. And now will you think me rude if I leave you to-morrow morning for two or three hours? I must go and see my parents upon some business?"

"Not in the least. Send the gentlemen out, especially the Marchese, and I shall be perfectly happy with my boy. You won't mind his coming down, and keeping me company?"

"Far from it. I want you to feel perfectly at home."

"Talking of home, I might as well give up my town house, and shut up my country one, for all I see of either of them," laughed Lady Lynstone. "But I really am going home shortly, and shall hope to see you at dear old Lynstone!"

"I'll come with pleasure. Shall I bring the Marchese with me?" she added laughing.

"Pray, pray don't?"

"Well, we'll have to be off soon; the gentlemen are coming."

The Duchess led her husband aside and gave him instructions as to how the party was to be divided, and Lady Lynstone found herself opposite Lord Carruthers, with her host and hostess as her companions.

"I thought we four would keep together," said the latter, kindly, "for our little Countess here is afraid of a pair of admiring dark eyes."

"What, of the Marchese?" replied the Duke. "Well, he has a fierce look sometimes, I must confess."

"It is very strange," said Lord Carruthers, thoughtfully; "but I am certain that man and I have met before, and I believe he has the same feeling concerning me; and, moreover, he has not left a favourable impression upon my memory."

"I hope he is all right," replied St. Ives. "I met him first at the Duke of Downshire's. The man sings divinely, and upon that occasion carried all his hearers with him."

"Does he?" answered the other eagerly. "Well, I'll keep my eye upon him, but I'm almost sure now, he is not a stranger to me. However, I may be wrong. I was a very young man at the time—a lad in fact—travelling with my tutor. It is some years since, still his is a peculiar face."

"A handsome one, decidedly."

"Yes! of the *Fra Diavolo* type." Then turning to the ladies he engaged them both for a couple of round dances, just as the carriage drew up at Lord Molyneux's house; and he helped Lady Lynstone across the crimson carpet at the entrance, past the watchers who usually congregate to see the ladies' costumes, amidst the ferns and flowers, into the spacious Hall.

Already there before them was the Marchese di Riviera.

Lady Lynstone started as she saw him, for she knew he had been left behind when they drove off.

"You have come by electricity, Marchese," said the Duchess of St. Ives.

"I never waste time, Duchess," he replied, with a bow; "my countrymen do not let the grass grow under their feet, I can assure you!"

"No? I thought you were all ease loving people!"

"We earn our ease before we enjoy it!"

Lady Molyneux here came forward, and gave her friends a hearty welcome, and in a few moments Lady Lynstone was gliding evenly round the ball-room, held by the firm clasp of Lord Carruthers, thoroughly enjoying the good dancing of her partner, while the Marchese stood stroking his dark moustache, evidently in a thoughtful mood.

"Confound the fellow!" he said at last, half aloud. "I wish to Heaven I could tell if he remembers me. As for myself, I never forget a face."

He stepped forward and asked Lady Lynstone for a dance, but could only obtain the promise of a square one, much to his annoyance.

It is scarcely possible to hold consecutive conversation in the mazes of the lancers, and he did not attempt it.

The heat, the dresses, the Academy, the floral decorations, and a few compliments carried them to the end, and then he offered her his arm.

She made some hasty excuse to join her friend, and cleverly avoided a *little à côté* with him all the evening.

"I can wait," he murmured, in a low voice, while his dark eyes followed her every movement.

It would have been a pleasant ball to the little Countess, save for those eyes; but it was over at last, and the party of four returned home as they went.

As the carriage drew up at the Duke's mansion Lord Carruthers noticed a woman with a strange, weird, but still beautiful face, lingering near the entrance, and as the queen of night shone upon it, there was something familiar in it; and a fancy seized him to watch her movements, although he could scarcely tell why. And having bade his friends good-night, he asked the butler to let him out by some other door, begging him to admit him again the same way upon his return, as he was going for a stroll while he smoked his weed.

(To be continued next week.)

(This story commenced in No. 1069. Back Nos. can be obtained through any Newsagent.)

MAUSIE.

THE CONCLUDING CHAPTER OF THIS DELIGHTFUL NOVELLETTE FROM PAGE 612.

Tells how Paul Derringer, with his fulsome flattery, is unmasked; and Lord George is eventually left with the field to himself.

Therefore, when the musicians struck up a waltz he offered his arm and whirled her away from the close proximity of Paul Derringer in a perfectly contented frame of mind, and clasped her to him with his strong right arm, and revelled in the pleasure of feeling her little form leaning against him and her breath on his cheek.

"How well our hostess is looking to-night!" he remarked when the dance was over.

"Lovely, I think!" said his companion warmly, glancing at the graceful figure in pink satin and point lace, and priceless pearls. "Who is that she is speaking to—very pretty, don't you think so?"

"No, I don't admire her," returned Max; "but then you know I admire only one style of beauty," and he gave her a look that pointed the speech, "and have eyes for none other."

"Bad taste not to admire her; she is very stylish and attractive looking," laughed Miss Hartrey, though a redder bloom glowed in her soft cheeks.

"Dashing is the term I should use," returned her companion, studying the lady in question closely, "and dashing she is, I know."

"Why? How?"

She is called Jacky Pilkington, though her right name is Mary, and has decided sporting proclivities and tastes."

"Really! I should not have thought so; she looks feminine enough in evening costume."

"You would not say so if you saw her following the hounds at full gallop, or out with the beagles, in a cut-away coat, high collar, cravat, and a man's low hat."

"No, it sounds rather masculine."

"And she looks very much so in her every-day attire, I assure you."

"She seems to attract a good deal of attention," observed Mayale, watching the crowd of men that were gathering round her.

"Yes, and there goes Derrington to swell the list."

The girl's cheek paled just a shade as she noted his *expressed* and lover-like manner as he bent over the sporting young lady so unlike her in every respect, and a pang shot through her heart as the dashing young woman with a loud, though musical laugh, waved aside her other admirers, and yielding herself to the soldier's outstretched arm floated away with him, her chin resting on his shoulder, her full, red lips parted in a smile, her eyes raised admiringly to his handsome face.

The girl could not analyse her feelings, could not tell what made her feel so unreasonably angry and annoyed at the sight of Paul Derringer and Jacky Pilkington dancing together, and seeming to get on admirably well. Was it wounded pride, or was it love that made her sore and nettled, and feel a sudden wish to annoy this gallant son of Mars?

"That man's an arrant flirt!" exclaimed Roy, with contempt in his tone.

"Max!" came in a startled burst from the young lips.

"Well, my dear," he went on, coolly; "does it surprise you to hear that?"

"Well—I—I—thought—he was an officer—and a gentleman—and above all that sort of thing," she faltered.

"My dear child," with a light laugh that

grated terribly on her strained ears. "there are hundreds and hundreds of men who are officers and gentlemen, and yet not at all above carrying on a simultaneous flirtation with half-a-dozen different girls; and end by breaking at least one heart out of the bunch."

"Surely, Mr. Derringer would not do that!" she said, indignantly.

"I am not so sure," replied Max, tranquilly. I dare say he's *enough*, like most of his class, and ready for any distraction, especially that of a fresh and pretty face; and while it's sport to him he forgets it is death to the poor girl he makes a fool of."

"I don't believe he is capable of such conduct," returned Maysie, with a serious firmness, totally unlike her usual careless gaiety.

"Don't you?" and, struck by her tone, for the first time her lover's eyes sought her face inquiringly, and something in its look and pallor gave him a twinge of fear.

Did she care for this worthless flirt? Had he bewitched her with his shameless flatteries and barefaced sophistries?

He trembled at the mere thought; such a beautiful vista of probable and future misery loomed before him. He had only a half promise from her, nothing binding, and if this *blasé* guardsman chose to come between him and this girl he loved, what could he do? How could he save her and himself?

He knew as yet that she did not love him as he wished to be loved—as, in a word, he loved her—but he had hoped in time it would come, and now there was this new, unforeseen danger.

Derringer was so gay, witty, brilliant, what wonder women fancied him; and Maysie was unsophisticated, had seen nothing of the great world, and would fall an easy victim.

What could he do? What could he do? Something of the misery he felt shone in his honest eyes, for she said, abruptly, just as Derringer came whirling towards them,—

"Shall we go on?" and Max, clasping her once more to his breast, swung her away, wishing he could take her there and then to some distant part of the world, where never again would this man's eyes light on Maysie, nor hers on him. That was not possible, of course, but he made the most of the fleeting minutes that were his to do pretty well what he pleased with, and took her to the dim recesses of the beautiful conservatory, and exerted himself to please and amuse his companion.

His efforts, somehow or the other, fell rather flat. She was absent and depressed; answered him with monosyllables, and the moment the band struck up a fresh waltz and the strains penetrated to their retreat rose abruptly, and going towards the door leading to the hall, said nervously,—

"I am engaged for this."

"Won't you wait for your partner to come and find you?" he asked, in surprise.

"No; it is cold here," and she shivered slightly, and then as Max offered his arm she tripped awkwardly, tearing her dress.

"I must go upstairs and get this mended," she said, pausing at the foot of the staircase. "If Mr. Derringer asks where I am please say that I shall not be able to dance this waltz," and then she ran lightly and swiftly up, and Max watched the white figure till it disappeared with loving eyes, and a new sense of wretchedness and misery at his heart.

Meanwhile, Derringer was searching everywhere for his partner, with an eager, feverish haste. He did not wish to miss a single turn. She danced divinely, and was out and away the prettiest girl in the room—the belle of the ball—a credit to any fellow to be seen often with her, and on good terms.

Where was she? Not in the conservatory; he had hunted it through thoroughly, disturbing several spooney couples as he did so, and earning anything save their blessings. Not in the library; that was tenanted by three or four old fogies intent on whist. Not in the boudoir; Jacky Pilkington had retired there with a fox-hunting, port-drinking, sport-loving squire, at whom she was industriously setting her cap. Not in the dancing-room, for he eagerly scrutinised each couple as they revolved past, and then skirted round the corners until he came to a dead stop before Blanche and Ben, resting arm in arm, after their exertions, at the shrine of terpsichore.

"Where's your sister, Hartrey?" he asked.

"I am sure I don't know," said Ben, gruffly.

"This is my dance, and I can't find her anywhere. When did you see her last?"

"Haven't seen her for some time."

"Then you can't tell me where she is?"

This was said as though he thought the young fellow would conceal her whereabouts if he could.

"No, I can't tell you where she is. I'm not her keeper!" he responded, testily.

"The last time I saw her she was going to the conservatory with my brother," put in Blanche, quickly, fearing a row between the two men, for Ben looked sulky as a bear, and Derringer's dark eyes snapped fire at the snub. "If you can find him he will probably be able to tell you where she is."

"Thanks. I'll go and look for him," he said, retiring hastily, not wishing to quarrel with Maysie's brother, and understanding the reason of his abrupt manner to him.

"How I hate the fellow!" snarled Hartrey.

"You seem to, dear boy," agreed Miss Roy, calmly, "and you certainly show it plainly."

"I mean to show it. I want to give him the cold shoulder, only he's one of those confoundedly thick-skinned brutes who won't see a snub."

"Won't take it, you mean," cried Blanche. "He saw it, for his eyes literally blazed, but it doesn't suit him just at present to notice your extremely cordial and friendly manner."

"Of course not. He won't see it until he has grown tired of Maysie, then he'll be quick enough at taking an affront."

"Perhaps he won't tire of her," remarked his companion demurely.

"Not tire of her!" exclaimed the young fellow angrily. "Why he'll grow weary of anything in the shape of a woman."

"I'm not so sure," unconsciously repeating her brother's words. "She is very sweet, and fresh and loveable, and he has been here some time now, and has not paid much if any attention to other women. He may really love at last."

"Oh, rubbish, Blanche! How can a sensible girl like you be so foolish!" and Ben being extremely disgusted, commenced dancing again with great vigour and energy, and Derringer pursuing his search found Max standing like a statue at the foot of the stairs, opening and shutting a fan rapidly, yet withal, in an absent manner.

"Excuse me addressing you," began the cavalry man, for he did not know his rival personally, "but your sister told me she thought you could tell me where Miss Hartrey is?"

"Miss Hartrey has torn her dress, and has gone to get it repaired. She asked me to tell you, if you asked for her, that she would be unable to dance this waltz with you."

Max spoke in a cold, precise tone, that sounded strange and formal even to his

own ears, and the two men stood for a full moment facing each other, looking into each other's eyes, with a deadly glance of hatred; then Paul bowing slightly, said "Thank you," and moved away, and Roy began once more to furl and unfurl the beautiful white feathers which he had given Maysie, and in such an ungenteel fashion, that the delicate sticks threatened to break every moment.

It was late in the evening, when Derringer had his second chance of dancing with Maysie, and this time he had no difficulty in finding her. She was sitting near Blanche, in a conspicuous part of the room, and rose at once when he offered his arm.

"Miss Hartrey, you ought to strike at least three names out of your programme, and let me put my name down instead!" he said, smiling down at her, and pressing her hand close to his side.

"Why?" she asked, raising her starlike eye to his, then dropping them suddenly as she encountered the ardent gaze of his.

"Because you did me out of my first waltz."

"I—I—could—not—help—it," she stammered, "my dress was torn."

"Yes, and it took an uncommonly long time to mend. It was unkind of you, most cruel, to disappoint me!"

"I really could not help it," she reiterated.

"Now, had it been Roy," he went on coolly, "you would have had two tacks given to your farbelows, and have flown down to him swiftly on the wings—of—love."

"I am sure I should not!" she cried, hastily. "It would have been all the same, no matter who I was engaged to!"

"Then isn't he—a great deal to you—Maysie?"

"He is an old friend of my brother's, and, consequently, of mine," she returned evasively, and hating herself for not boldly avowing that he was more than that to her, at any rate.

"Nothing more?" queried the importunate Paul.

"Nothing more," she murmured, adding to herself, "at present."

"Then come into the conservatory, and promise to sit out the next dance with me, no matter who comes to claim you," and constraining her silence into a consent, he led her to a luxurious seat behind a wide-spreading palm, and did his best to improve the golden opportunity and weaken Roy's chance.

"You will come into supper with me?" he asked, after awhile.

"I am so sorry; I can't. I am engaged," she replied.

"To whom?"

"Mr. Roy," very faintly.

"Oh, your old friend!" with sarcastic emphasis on the word. "Can't you throw him over?"

"No."

"Do!"

"Ben would be angry."

"Never mind Ben; give me the pleasure this once of taking you in. I am going back to town ere long."

The girl wavered and hesitated, and as she did so Paul bent towards her, for they had risen, and were standing facing each other, and just at that moment Max came in to claim his supper partner and stood rooted to the spot, for in that dim light it seemed to him that Derringer's lips were on her brow, and that she did not shrink from his bold caress; and with a sick feeling of utter misery at his heart the young man turned away, and, after all, Paul Derringer took Maysie in to supper, for she thought Max had forgotten her; and he was so

witty, and genial, and brilliant that he made up for her coldness and abstraction.

The next afternoon, as usual, he presented himself at the farm; but, to his annoyance, found Maysie surrounded by Blanche, and Max, and Ben, and could not get a word alone with her; moreover, no one was cordial to him. Indeed, Hartrey was so rough and short, and snubbed in such an unmistakable way, at last was so uncivil that the other took the hint and kept away, trusting to chance to give him an opportunity of seeing Maysie.

A week passed before he did. The weather had changed, and bright cheery sunshine gave place to dark clouds and storms of rain, that fell unceasingly, making the river rough and turbulent, and ran rapid as a mill-stream.

She could not get out. But at last a morning came when the rain ceased, or only fell at intervals, and then a letter was brought to her by one of the grooms from Kerwin Hall. It was from Derringer, begging her to meet him that afternoon by the river-side, near the stepping stones, as he was leaving for town.

The girl sent no answer to this letter; but when the hour fixed on for the meeting drew nigh she put on her broad-brimmed, shady hat and set out for the rendezvous—not blithely, but with slow steps and down-drooped head.

She reached the river first, and stood under a copper beech, straining her eyes to catch the first glimpse of the figure she knew would come from the other side, across the stepping-stones.

In her perturbation of mind she did not notice how swollen the river was, how it swirled by, and that many of the stones were covered by the rushing waters; she only thought that this fascinating, handsome friend of Lord George's was going back to London, and that she would see him no more. She was so absorbed by her thoughts that she did not see Max Roy coming along from Sheltown, and started with surprise when he exclaimed,—

"Maysie!"

"Child, what are you doing here?" he asked.

"Nothing," she answered, a feeling of annoyance stealing over her at his inopportune arrival.

"Then will you walk on with me?" he asked, gently. "I am going to see Ben?"

"I don't want to go back yet," she answered, irritably.

"I will wait as long as you wish," he responded.

"Hadin't you better go on if you wish to see Ben?" she suggested. "He was at home when I left."

"Maysie, you want to get rid of me," he said, reproachfully.

"No—only—only—" she stammered.

"What is it, child?" bending down to look into her eyes. "Why do you avoid me? Oh! Maysie, those cruel rumours I have heard are not true, surely? You do not mean to give me up for that man Lord George has brought here?"

"You have no right," she began, proudly, and then her eyes fell on the Milprene on the third finger of her left hand, and she stopped suddenly. This man at her side was the one whom she had promised to try and love, who was almost her affianced husband.

"Have you forgotten—have you taken back the right you gave me?" he asked, sorrowfully, looking at her wistfully.

"No, oh, no!" she commenced, hurriedly, and then raising her eyes she gave an exclamation of fear.

Max followed their direction, and muttered,—

"Fool, he will be in the river in a

minute!" for there, leaping unsteadily from one submerged stone to another, was Paul Derringer.

"Ah, save him, save him!" she shrieked, wildly, as, missing his footing, he fell into the turbulent river.

"Ah, Heaven! is he so much to you?" groaned Max, as he flung off his coat and plunged in after his rival into the seething waters that were tearing down over rocks, and broken trees towards the weir.

Maysie watched with straining eyes and wildly-beating heart. Derringer seemed quite helpless, and was being tossed hither and thither, but Max was swimming powerfully towards him. A few strokes more he had seized him, and then turning with great difficulty, began to breast the stream; slowly he came towards the bank, sometimes submerged with his burden, avoiding with great difficulty the debris that was being washed down the river.

"What is it?" cried Lord George, who rode up at that minute, and sprang from his horse.

"Save them, or they will both die!" said Maysie, in a hoarse whisper, pointing to where Max, clinging to the trunk of a great tree that was formed into the bank, seemed unable to proceed further or help himself, or the man on his arm.

In a moment Lord George took in the situation, and creeping carefully along the tree trunk he lay down, and managed, with great difficulty, to drag Derringer up on it.

"Hold on, Roy!" he called out, for he noticed the young lawyer looked deathly pale, and that there was an ugly cut over his eye. "I shall be back to help you in a few moments!"

With care, and much trouble, he managed to get his friend to the bank, and leaving him there got back as quickly as he could, but just as he reached the end of the trunk a large branch of the tree became detached, and sweeping down, struck Roy on the head, causing him instantly to lose his hold and sink.

Lord George plunged in after him, and a few strokes brought him to his side. Grasping the drowning man firmly, he struck out for the bank, and, being near, succeeded, after a short, but terribly sharp struggle, to reach it.

Maysie was kneeling by the brink, and her strong, young hands helped to drag Max from the river, and she took his poor, battered, bloodstained head on her lap, while Lord George shook himself like a Newfoundland, and gazed sorrowfully at the deathly face.

"Is he much hurt?" she asked, in an awe-stricken whisper, giving never a glance at the half-unconscious Derringer, who lay full length on the grass, hardly knowing whether he was on earth, or in Heaven, or anywhere else.

"Fatally, I fear," answered the brave young fellow, who had just twice risked his life.

"Oh, Max! Max!" she moaned.

Now, too late, the veil was torn from before her eyes, and face to face with death she knew this was the man she loved with all the depth and strength of her tender nature.

"My love! my love! do not leave me!" she implored, raising his face to her breast; and at the impassioned word the heavy lids lifted, and as she looked into the wistful, misty, blue eyes, she whispered: "Max, I love you!"

One moment they gazed up at her, and then they closed for ever, and he died content in her loving embrace.

The legend of the Milprene came true; she had lost a love as strong and devoted as ever woman won.

* * * * *

A year later, Lord George sat in his smoking-room waiting for the return of Paul Derringer, who had gone to Stretton's Farm to plead for Maysie's love, to ask her to be his wife.

"Well?" he said, as Paul entered, one glance at his gloomy face being enough. "She has refused you?"

"Yes."

"I thought she would!"

"And you are glad?" said the other bitterly. "You think you will have a chance now yourself?"

"I hope so," he answered, quietly, a feeling of great gladness at his heart, for his love for Maysie was second only to that Max had borne her.

And at the homestead, Blanche and her husband Ben were rejoicing that Derringer had been sent away, a discomforted wooer, and that the breaking-off of his engagement to gentle Lady Grace, which nearly broke her heart, had been useless.

They knew Maysie would not think of love or marriage for a long, long while, because, like Queen Iselt:

"All her soul was as the breaking sea,
And all her heart as hungered as the wind."

But they hoped in the years to come that Lord George's quiet unobtrusive devotion might gain its reward, and that she might marry him, when she has forgotten, as far as she can forget, her girlhood's lover, honest, faithful Max Roy!

[THE END.]

FACETIÆ

FRIEND (at art exhibition): "Is that gentleman an art critic too?" Art Critic: "No, he's only an artist."

"MA when I get big I'm goin' 'way off to be a pirate." "Are you Bobby?" "Yes, but don't you be scared; I'll come home at night to sleep."

RAGGED RILEY: "Sure, we're in fashion fur onct." Weary Raggles: "How can we be?" Ragged Riley: "Th' paper O'm readin' says th' new style shocs has ventilated toes."

SHE: "I wonder if there ever was such a person as the fool-killer?" He: "Don't ask such nonsensical questions. How do you suppose I know?" She (sweetly): "Of course, dear, I know you never met him."

PRACTICE MAKES PERFECT.—Angela (to whom Edgar has been proposing): "Tell me, Edgar? Did you ever say anything like this to any woman before?" Edgar (in a burst of honesty): "My dear girl, do you think that it could be done like that the first time?"

IT BEGAN LIKE ONE.—Mamma: "Once upon a time there was a goose that laid golden eggs." Little Eddie (interrupting): "Is we to believe this story, mamma?" Mamma (amused): "Just as you please." Little Eddie (with a sigh of relief): "Oh, I thought perhaps it was a Bible story."

EXPLAINED.—O'Hoolahan: "Oi hear it took Riley's funeral half an hour to pass a given pint. Phat is a 'given pint,' anyway?" O'Callahan: "Whor, a saloon is a given pint-fer in-shance." O'Hoolahan: "Oh! a saloon is it? B'gorrah, it's a wonder they iver got past it at all, at all!"

THE absent-minded man was nearing the railroad station. "There! I know I had forgotten something," he exclaimed to his wife. "Why, I'm sure we have everything," she replied; "what is it you've forgotten?" The absent-minded man pressed his brow. "Bless my soul!" he cried; "I've forgotten where we intended going."

STATISTICS

THE railways of the United Kingdom received in 1890 no less a sum than £1,054,863 for carrying His Majesty's mails, and of this sum, England and Wales took £874,415.

AMONG the minor receipts of railway companies is the heading "excess luggage," and from this source the tidy sum of nearly £6,000,000 is received. About £1,000,000 of this comes from the poor traveller who has to "pay out," owing to his boxes weighing more than the stipulated amount.

A FRENCH investigator has come to the conclusion that the brains of military and naval men give out most quickly. It is stated that out of every 100,000 men of the army or naval profession 190 are hopeless lunatics. Taking artists, lawyers, doctors, clergy, literary men, and civil servants, and striking an average, it is found that 177 go mad to each 100,000. Domestic servants and labourers are not far behind and then comes the mechanics, of whom only 66 in each 100,000 lose their wits. Commercial men retain their sanity the best of the whole group, as they send only 42 out of 100,000 to the mad-house.

GEMS

It is strange how often some people prove themselves foolish; and yet have no knowledge of it.

Not that which men do worthily, but that which they do successfully is what history makes haste to record.

THE art, which is grand and yet simple, is that which presupposes the greatest elevation both in artist and in public.

PATIENCE, among the virtues, is like the pearl among the gems, and by its quiet radiance it heightens every human grace.

Do not despise any opportunity because it seems small. The way to make an opportunity grow is to take hold of it and use it.

HOUSEHOLD TREASURES

USE OF SOUP MEAT.—In making soup the flavour and some of the nourishment are, of course, drawn from the meat; but the fibre which contains the greatest amount of albuminoids is left unharmed in the meat; hence, it is rather extravagant to throw away soup meat. Being without flavour it should be made into some highly seasoned dish, as curry or hash flavoured with onion, or into pressed meat highly seasoned with onion and parsley.

MACARONI WITH TOMATO.—Macaroni is a most admirable food, and when served with cheese it will always take the place of meat. The first preparation of the macaroni is always the same no matter how it is dressed. A pound of macaroni will take four quarts of water for boiling. It must be boiled rapidly for twenty minutes, then drained and thrown into cold water for at least half-an-hour, and it is then ready to cook. The Italian fashion is to boil the macaroni for fifteen minutes, and blanch it, then cook it in good stock; or it may be put into a saucepan with bones or a piece of meat, cover, stew for twenty minutes, then drain. Then put the macaroni into a double boiler. Boil down stewed tomatoes until they are almost as thick as paste; add them to the macaroni with half a teaspoonful of beef extract and a little of the stock in which the macaroni was boiled; add a tablespoonful of grated onion, a level teaspoonful of salt and a dash of pepper. Cover the boiler, and cook for five or ten minutes until the macaroni is nicely seasoned. Serve with cheese in a separate dish.

SOCIETY

THE toasts on board the *Ophir* at the farewell luncheon were drunk in silence. That silence was an act of homage to the memory of Queen Victoria, and seemed to make her presence almost felt at the moment of historic parting between the King and the Heir Apparent. Three times did his Majesty pause to get grip of his emotion as he spoke of the "grief and trial" of the good-bye. That was when, in a few words, he proposed the health of the Duke and Duchess; and when the Duke proposed the health of his "father and mother," he, too, spoke in a voice that was overcharged with feeling.

It is curious, considering the innumerable statements and misstatements that have been made as to the consequences of the accession of King Edward VII., that no one seems to have noticed the fact that the Duchess of Fife is now Princess Royal; and it is still more remarkable that no Scotsman has complained of the ignoring of the title of Duke of Rothesay, which, with that of Duke of Cornwall, devolved upon the Duke of York as soon as he became eldest son of the King.

It is a popular error to suppose that the dwelling-rooms at Windsor are very sumptuous. Queen Elizabeth is responsible for a great number of them, and they were built rather hurriedly by her orders. She had taken refuge at Windsor from the plague which was raging in London, and her maids of honour and her attendants revolted at the uncomfortable condition of their rooms, which were low, dark, and cold. The Queen herself was furious because her dinner was invariably served up stone cold; but being of an enquiring mind she discovered that the kitchen was nearly half a mile from the dining-room, and straightway built the present kitchen,

which is very large and commodious. Elizabeth built the Octagon Library, which she is still said to haunt, and where she was frequently seen, it is said, last year.

PRINCESS HENRY OF BATTENBERG leads the most secluded of lives at the Villa Cyrenos, and is very little seen by the outside world. Her Royal Highness is terribly worn by her mother's death, and she feels it most keenly. Her hair has become quite grey, and she looks ten years older than she did last year at this time. In the ex-Empress Eugénie she has a warm and faithful friend, and it is a great pleasure for her to be with her at this time of mourning. It was on account of her health that the Princess did not go direct from England to Cronberg after her mother's death, but she intends to spend a week or two at Cronberg with the Empress Frederick on her return journey, when she will also make a short stay in the neighbourhood of Darmstadt.

THE German Empress has lately given the Emperor a present of three fowling-pieces, which were made at the Royal Small Arms Factory, and which are the invention of a well-known gunsmith, Louis Schlegelmüller. The curious part of these guns is the fact that no screws are used to fasten the various parts together. The Emperor is reported to be delighted with the present.

WHEN Earl Roberts goes to Windsor, to receive from the Corporation of Windsor the freedom of the Royal borough at the end of March, he will receive the document enclosed in a casket carved from a piece of oak from Windsor Forest. On the top wreaths of laurels are represented, surrounding the rose, shamrock, and thistle, and the arms of Windsor and Eaton. The back bears a view of the Guildhall, with the inscription, "Presented to Field-Marshal Lord Roberts, V.C., Guildhall, Windsor."

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Gleanings from Many Sources.

JEWS are not permitted to buy land in Russia.

ABOUT one-sixteenth of the paper output of the world is converted into books.

It is said that after the age of thirty the brain of a woman decreases in weight.

WEALTHY Russians seek final repose in glass coffins, which are hermetically sealed.

OSBORNE HOUSE, Cowes, was purchased by Queen Victoria in 1846, and rebuilt by Mr. Cubitt.

SULPHUROUS baths are supplied gratuitously in Paris to all persons employed in handling lead.

The word **Albion** is used by Aristotle to describe Britain, and is so called on account of its chalky cliffs.

The lettuce was introduced into England from Flanders about 1520 by Queen Catherine, wife of Henry VIII.

The title, **admiral**, does not appear to have been adopted in England until about 1800, but was previously in use in France.

The **Adamites** were a sect said to have existed about 120, and to have been quite naked in their religious assemblies, asserting that if Adam had not sinned there would have been no marriages.

DOMITIAN, the Roman Emperor, was cruel and bloodthirsty. Many innocent people he doomed to death. One of his favourite pastimes was to occupy his leisure in catching flies, which he would then pierce with a needle.

The festival of **Easter** was instituted about 68 and observed by the Church in commemoration of our Saviour's resurrection, and was so called in England from the Saxon goddess *Eostre*, whose festival was in April.

It is said that **St. Anthony** lived to the age of 105 on 12 oz. of bread and water daily, and **James the Hermit** to the age of 104; **St. Epiphanius** lived to 115; **Simeon the Stylite** to 112; and **Kentigern**, commonly called **St. Mungo**, to 185 years of age.

A **CURIOUS** plant is the "life tree," of Jamaica. It continues to grow for years after it has been dug up and its roots exposed to the sun. Leaves severed from the limbs will remain green for weeks. The tree can only be destroyed by fire.

MARRIAGEABLE women in Serbia have a queer way of announcing that they are in the matrimonial market. A dressed doll, hanging in the principal window of a house, indicates that there is living there a woman who is anxious to become a bride.

The **eastor oil plant** is quite ornamental. In temperate climates it grows to a height of four or five feet, while in warm latitudes it grows much larger. Although the odour from it is not disagreeable to human beings, it drives away mosquitoes and other insects. In **Maracalibo** it is freely planted before doors and windows.

The residents of northern Finland use a peculiar stone, which is rather common in that country, as a substitute for a barometer. This stone, which they call **Ilmakiuri**, turns black or blackish-grey when bad weather is approaching; fine weather has the effect of turning it almost white. The Finns regard the stone with superstitious reverence, but scientists say that its changes in colour are due to salts contained in its composition.

The early history of card-playing is very obscure, but it is definitely known that the first suit-marks was of the date 1428. These were designs of cups, swords, clubs, and money. It is possible that the German marks—acorns, bells, leaves, and hearts—may have been earlier. Before the close of the fifteenth century French suit-marks were in use; and the English playing-cards of that time were of French or German origin.

BAGPIPES are barbaric, after all. So it is not wonderful that the Sultan of Morocco has given in to their fascination. He loves tartan too, which also is, so to speak, bag-pipey in colour-arrangement. The Sultan has lately ordered from a Glasgow firm of pipe-makers a set of pipes for his own use, and it is said they will beat the record for cost, being valued at £300. One of the chief officers at the Sultan's Court is a **Maclean**—a nephew of the Highland chief of Lochbaine in Mull, who insists on spelling his name **MacLaine**.

The **United States** is paying thirty millions annually in pensions. Every Civil War soldier applicant incapacitated for work, or the widow of a deceased soldier, is allowed a pension of 32s. a month. There are about 1,000,000 pensions, of whom nearly 2,000 are widows of soldiers who fought in the war of 1812; there are 9,000 pensioners of the war with Mexico of 1846, and nearly as many widows of their deceased comrades; 1,600 survivors of Indian wars, and 4,000 widows; and the remaining claimants date from the Civil War, with the exception of a few who form the advance guard of the Spanish-American War pensioners. In the forty years ending with June 30, 1900, the United States has disbursed in pensions the incredible sum of \$528,000,000.

OUR GREAT PUZZLE

We want a big advertisement that will make the name of the "LONDON READER" known wherever the English language is spoken, and to advertise ourselves we publish a puzzle that is really worth your trying to answer. It may mean hard work, consulting different books and thinking a great deal, but the **PRIZE** is well worth the effort. **EVERYONE** who sends in a correct solution will receive either our **NOVISTA Diamond Brooch** or our **NOVISTA Diamond Scarf Pin**. The brooch is 18-carat gold cased, and the mounting consists of three superb facsimile diamonds. They bear such a marvellous resemblance to real diamonds, and are so full of fire and glitter that it would take an expert to know the difference. This beautiful brooch may be given as a present to mother, sister, wife or sweetheart, and will be appreciated as a token of high esteem or memento of truest love. To all ordinary appearance it is equal to a costly diamond brooch. The **NOVISTA Diamond Pin** is in every way equal to the brooch and would adorn the person of the most fastidious and would be a delightful gift to a lover or friend across the sea.

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We cannot say how long this marvellous offer will remain open, it may be a week or it may be months. One thing is quite certain, if you send to-day you will be safe. Don't delay a single moment. Sit down and puzzle out this list, and send your answer to **The Puzzle Editor**, "LONDON READER" Office, 30-32, Ludgate Hill, London. **This advertisement** and the six penny stamps must be sent with your answer. If you are correct we will send your **PRIZE** at once, and when your friends see the reward that your ingenuity has won, we know that they will purchase a copy of the "LONDON READER," so as to try for our Great Twentieth Century Competition.

BEAUTIFUL PRIZES

CUT THIS OUT

CUT THIS OUT

Helpful Talks with Our Readers

BY THE EDITOR.

The Editor is pleased to hear from his readers at any time.

All letters must give the name and address of the writers, not for publication, but as a guarantee of good faith.

MIRROR.—Saturate a piece of flannel with turpentine and rub it over the mirrors; this will effectually keep the flies away. To remove the marks made by these insects, paraffin should be used for the steel, a cut lemon dipped in salt for the brass, and hot strong soda and water for the lacquered articles.

LUCKY E.—I am very pleased to have your letter stating that the brooch arrived safely and that you "appreciate it and your friends admire it." I consider it a very handsome piece of jewellery and well suited to adorn the neck of any young lady. I am glad that the *London Reader* gives you and your mother so much pleasure.

PERPLEXED.—You are bewitched by an outside appearance. No doubt the young man looks very nice, and his moustache is carefully twisted and waxed, or whatever he does to it, and I dare say his collars and ties are immaculate. But if he were introduced to your circle he would reveal himself as a very impossible person. He would be uncomfortable himself, and he would make everybody else uncomfortable. You may say that you are ready to fly the world, and out conventionality, but it is all nonsense and dreams, and you may take this practical advice, that it would lead to a good deal of unhappiness. So don't be foolish and make your future a sacrifice to your fancies.

FAVOURITE.—It is said that it is not lucky to get married in a black gown. Yet I don't see how you are to change your things after the ceremony. You can't do it in the vestry, can you? Why not compromise, as it were, for the one day, and have a bridal gown of soft grey touched if you like with black? Then you could go away in it, which would do away with the necessity for changing.

FOREVER.

Every golden beam of light
Leaves a shadow to the sight;
Every dewdrop on the rose
To the ocean's bosom goes.
Every star that ever shone
Somewhere has a gladness thrown.
All that lives goes on forever,
Forever and forever.

Every link in friendship's chain
Forged another link again;
Every throb that love has cost,
Made a heaven and was not lost.
Every look and every tone
Has a seed in memory sown.
All that lives goes on forever,
Forever and forever.

Never yet a spoken word
But in echo it was heard;
Never was a living thought
But some magic it has wrought.
And no deed was ever done
That has died from under sun.
All that lives goes on forever,
Forever and forever.

So, O soul, there's no farewell
Where souls once together dwell;
Have no fears, O beating heart,
There is no such word as part.
Hands that meet and closely clasp
Shall forever feel the grasp.
All that lives goes on forever,
Forever and forever.

A. K.

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